

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

BY

JOHN HUGHES

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REVISIONS**

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EXT. NEW YORK CITY - 59TH AND MADISON

The city is on the edge of winter. Late November. Thanksgiving week. Tuesday. The sky is low and dark. The sidewalks are clogged with pedestrians bundled against the chill wind blowing down the avenue. Shoulder-to-shoulder stampede of independent, socially incompatible human units returning to their domiciles after a day's work. Traffic is as traffic will be. Slow and tangled. Within the protective confines of their rolling pieces of territory, the drivers are more expressive and bold than the foot soldiers on the sidewalks..

EXT. STREET CORNER

A young MAN of unspecified origin is bustling, stocking caps on a corner.

EXT. ANOTHER CORNER

A cop is frisking a young BOY against a store, barely noticed by the current of passersby.

EXT. MID-BLOCK

A SALVATION ARMY TRIO is singing. Their voices are barely perceptible against the drone of the traffic.

EXT. GM BUILDING

The white marble tower dwarfing the thousands crossing its plaza.

C.U. ROLEX WATCH

On a man's wrist. It reads 5:56. A shirt and jacket cuff slowly slide down over the watch.

C.U. SHEET OF PAPER

Folded in thirds. A man's hand discreetly opens the top fold to reveal a travel itinerary. His index finger scans a line stopping on...DEPART NEW YORK 6:00 PM UNITED 105.

C.U. NEAL PAGE

A handsome young man. Early thirties. Impeccably dressed, perfectly coifed, elegantly dressed. A successful man deeply in control of his life. His eyes shift from down to up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

A cold, stark conference room. Marble table, harsh cove lighting, black leather, high-back chairs. Neal and an older MAN, JOHN DOLE are on one side of the table. Across from him are three nearly identical middle-aged MEN. Dark suits, white shirts, dark ties, dark hair combed straight back. They're studying a series of ad layouts. The man in the middle is holding one of the ads.

C.U. AD

It's for lipstick.

C.U. NEAL

He looks at his watch again. He's nervous about the time.

C.U. MAN

he's staring at the ad, considering it. Can't make up his mind.

C.U. JOHN

He looks at Neal.

C.U. NEAL

He looks at John. Shakes his head in disgust. He taps his watch and mouths, "I GOTTA GO!"

C.U. JOHN

He nods. He understands. He shrugs.

TRIO

Still staring at the ad. No expression, blank faces.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Neal looks at his watch again. He leans back in his chair. He's annoyed. The man sets the ad down. He looks across the table, opens his mouth to speak. John and Neal lean forward to receive his words. He shuts his mouth and picks up the ad again.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Luxury and style. Leather and stone. Neal bursts out of the offices and crosses the reception area. He's carrying a briefcase and a two suiter. John is right on his heels.

NEAL

I swear to God, John, one of these days I'm going to strangle those guys.

He hurries out double glass doors into the hallway. He sets down his briefcase and presses the DOWN button on the elevator bank.

NEAL

Two solid hours staring at the layouts to decide to reconvene after the holidays for a fresh look at the material? Are they completely out of their minds or am I being unreasonable?

JOHN

They're out of their minds but they're the client.

NEAL

They're not curing cancer, they're selling cosmetics for Christ's sake!

JOHN

A lot of their cosmetics may well cause cancer. They're rich, they're arrogant and they're stupid. But they pay the bills.

Neal presses his finger into the heat-sensitive button again.

NEAL

You're not going to the airport?

JOHN

I'm going out in the morning. No way I'm breaking my nuts rushing for
(MORE)

JOHN (Cont'd)
a plane tonight. Why don't you hang
with me and we'll fly out tomorrow?

NEAL

You can pull that with your wife. I
can't. If I'm not home tonight, the
marriage is a historical fact. It's
going to be bad enough getting along
with a houseful of relatives but if
we're fighting, it's gonna be hell.

JOHN

What's the difference if you're home
at nine tonight or nine tomorrow
morning?

NEAL

To Susan, failure to meet one's
scheduled arrival time is a sure
sign of marital infidelity.

JOHN

She doesn't trust you?

NEAL

Does your wife trust you?

JOHN

No. But I screw around. You don't.

NEAL

My mistress is a line of women's
cosmetics.

JOHN

If it's that bad, you better split
and you better sit down and decide
how you're going to free up some
time for the family. A bad marriage
eats time like you and me eat
peanuts.

NEAL

Yeah.

The elevator BELL SOUNDS. He picks up his briefcase.

NEAL

Have a nice holiday.

JOHN

That's a contradiction in terms.

NEAL

Amen.

The elevator doors open and Neal turns to face a capacity crowd in the elevator.

NEAL

Everybody inhale!

INT. GM BUILDING - LOBBY

The elevators disgorge their passengers, Neal among them. He's very anxious and annoyed by the slow moving crowd.

INT. LOBBY - DIFFERENT ANGLE

There's a large crowd at the doors. Neal cranes his neck to see what the delay is.

INT. LOBBY - REVOLVING DOORS

An elderly woman is moving through the doors at a snail's pace. She stops, takes a breather, moves another half a foot, stops...

EXT. BUILDING PLAZA

Neal squeezes out of the building and hurries across the plaza.

EXT. STREET

A crowd of people waiting for buses and taxis line the curb. Neal slips through to the curb and takes a frantic look up and down the avenue.

NEAL

Shit...!

EXT. 59TH STREET

Neal hurries down the street, weaving through pedestrians, throwing an arm up and letting out a sharp whistle every time he spots a cab.

EXT. PARK AVENUE

A tangle of traffic. People hailing cabs. Arms waving.

C.U. CAB LIGHT

It goes on.

C.U. MAN ON THE STREET

A middle-manager sort. He sees the light on the cab, puts his fingers to his lips and lets out with a piercing whistle.

HIS POV

The cab he's hailing starts a move to the curb.

EXT. 59TH STREET

Neal spots a cab, cuts between parked cars into the street. He opens the back door and starts in.

NEAL

LaGuardia.

INT. CAB - DRIVER

He turns in his seat. Gruff Russian immigrant. No bullshit taken.

DRIVER

I'm off-duty.

NEAL

He's not going to take no for an answer.

NEAL

Ten bucks over the meter. I'm in a hurry.

DRIVER

He's OFF-DUTY!

DRIVER

I'm off-duty. Get out. Close the door.

NEAL

He can't believe the guy won't take his offer. He increases it.

NEAL
Twenty bucks.

DRIVER

He's pissed.

DRIVER
You don't close the door? Hell with you...

He turns in the seat and hits the gas.

EXT. STREET

The cab lurches forward, Neal jumps back, his briefcase goes flying.

C.U. BRIEFCASE

The aluminum Haliburton case hits pavement and slides under a parked car. The car pulls out, rolling over the briefcase, flattening the center.

EXT. PARK AVENUE

The cab we saw before edges toward the curb. It's one lane of traffic away.

EXT. 59TH STREET AND PARK

Neal hurries along with his bent briefcase and smoldering temper. He glances at his watch.

C.U. WATCH

It reads 5:11.

C.U. NEAL

He's furious and panicked at the same time. He scans the street.

HIS POV

The cab pulls up to the curb.

C.U. NEAL

He sees the cab light.

C.U. LIGHT

Glowing white and free.

EXT. STREET

The man who hailed the cab steps into the street and grabs the handle to enter the cab. Neal rushes up.

NEAL
Are you taking this cab?

MAN
Yeah. I saw it first.

NEAL
Can I have it?

MAN
Can George Schultz shoot arrows out his ass?

NEAL
Yes or no?

MAN
I have no idea. I don't know George Schultz.

The man opens the cab door.

NEAL
Fifty bucks if you let me have the cab.

The man hesitates. The CABBIE blows his horn.

MAN
Fifty bucks?

CABBIE (O.C.)
Come on!

NEAL
Fifty bucks.

MAN
Anybody who'd pay fifty bucks for a cab will certainly pay seventy-five.

Behind Neal's back, a portly man in a navy blue, polyester overcoat drags a streamer trunk, a sample case and suitcase to the cab.

NEAL
Fine.

MAN
Good. A hundred bucks.

NEAL
A hundred bucks?

MAN
You're the one in the hurry.

Neal reaches for his wallet. The Cabbie gets out of the cab and pops the trunk. He helps the portly man hoist the trunk into the cab. They throw the suitcases in and slam the trunk shut.

NEAL
You're a thief.

MAN
More or less. I'm an attorney.

Neal counts out a hundred dollars in twenties. The portly man gets in the cab and it pulls out. Neal hands over the money.

NEAL
(sarcastic)
Happy holidays.

MAN
This'll help.

Neal turns to find the cab gone. He snaps his head down the street.

HIS POV

The cab has pulled away and is working back into the traffic flow.

EXT. STREET - NEAL

He's furious.

NEAL
Son of a bitch!

MAN
Force mejure, my friend. Force
mejure.

He pockets the cash and steps back up on the curb. Neal takes off after the cab:

EXT. STREET - CAB

It's stopped at a light, turning left. Neal runs between the waiting cars to the cab. He whips the door open and looks inside.

HIS POV

A portly man in his late thirties, DEL GRIFFITH, looks up at him with alarm. He's wearing the navy overcoat, a cheap blue plaid suit, blue, polyester dress shirt and navy polyester tie with a tie bar.

C.U. NEAL

He's livid.

NEAL
You took my cab, you son of a bitch!

C.U. DEL

He's surprised. He thought it was his cab.

DEL
I did?

C.U. TRAFFIC LIGHT

From red to green.

EXT. STREET

The cab lurches ahead. Neal jumps back, the briefcase goes flying again.

C.U. PAVEMENT

The case hits the deck and is nailed by a bus tire.

EXT. STREET - NEAL

He's standing in the middle of the moving traffic. Defeat.

EXT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT

A horrible jam of cars and buses.

EXT. ARRIVAL ZONE - BUS

A double decker airport bus is emptying of cut-rate travelers. Loaded tourists, haggard bottom-end business types and Neal. He's carrying his flattened briefcase, the FAO Schwartz bag and his two-suiter. He urges the people along.

NEAL

Come on, people, please!

INT. AIRPORT

Neal races across the crowded lobby to the ticket counter. A long line. He sets down his stuff and takes his ticket out of breast pocket. He looks at it and then at the line. He looks at his watch.

C.U. WATCH

It's 5:49.

C.U. NEAL

He's in a panic.

NEAL

What's the problem for God's sake?

The woman in front of him turns around, glad to share her anger.

WOMAN

Some jerk's been up there for ten minutes.

INT. LOBBY - TICKET COUNTER

A harried FEMALE TICKET AGENT is tapping on her computer keys.

AGENT
Smoking or non-smoking?

C.U. DEL GRIFFITH

The guy who took Neal's cab is the jerk that's been taking ten minutes.

DEL
(to himself)
Smoking or non?
(to the agent)
I'm trying to quit so sometimes I like non-smoking because it forces me to lay off the butts but then if we hit weather and I get shaky, I like to smoke.

AGENT

He sighs.

AGENT
Smoking or non-smoking?

DEL

He thinks, clicks his tongue.

DEL
Can I get an aisle seat in the last row of the non-smoking section so that if I change my mind I can ask someone to switch? If you don't have an aisle, I'll take a window but if all you have are middle seats, I'll go non-smoking because if I don't have enough elbow room I cheese everybody off reaching for my smokes. Also, is this a dinner flight? But before you answer let me say that I noticed you're wearing a wedding ring and I just want to say that your husband is a very lucky man and your perfume is heavenly.

He smiles warmly.

INT. CORRIDOR

Neal's running full-out down the corridor. He rounds a corner and comes to a stop.

INT. CORRIDOR - SECURITY CHECK POINT

There's a huge crowd, long line.

INT. CORRIDOR - NEAL

He can't win. He joins the line. Looks at his watch.

NEAL

Never make it. Never. Dammit!

INT. CORRIDOR - METAL DETECTOR

Del Griffith is, again, the cause of the delay. He's emptying his pockets of anything metal. A SECURITY GUARD is scanning with a hand-held detector.

DEL

You have no idea how often this happens to me.

The guard isn't interested in conversation.

DEL

It doesn't bother me. You're doing a job and I appreciate it. I'm the last person who'll give you flak, believe me.

The guard gets a loud reading at Del's feet.

C.U. DEL'S FOOT

The guard lifts his pant leg to reveal, stuck in the back of his cushion sole loafer, a shoe horn. He pulls it out.

GUARD AND DEL

He shows Del the shoe horn.

DEL

Son of a gun! I wondered why my damn foot hurt all day. Isn't that something? I must have walked eight miles with that in my shoe.

The guard dismisses him. Del takes his sample case and his briefcase and waddles off down the corridor.

INT. AIRPORT - DEPARTURE LOUNGE COUNTER

A harried MALE TICKET AGENT is besieged by angry flyers. He says nothing. Ignores the fray. Goes about his tasks.

INT. AIRPORT - LOUNGE

Neal is in the midst of the angry flyers. He has his smashed briefcase clenched under his arm, his two-suiter over his arm, tie loosened, ticket in hand.

C.U. DEL

He's holding everything up at the counter.

DEL

I ordered a special meal. Anyway to let me know if it's confirmed?

AGENT

He stares at Del.

AGENT

They'll let you know on board.
I can't help you.

He hands Del his ticket.

C.U. DEL

He smiles.

DEL

You're doing your job and I appreciate it. Thanks. I like you, I like your airline.

He gives the guy a wink and turns to face Neal.

C.U. NEAL

He recognizes Del as the person who jumped his cab.

NEAL AND DEL

Del recognizes Neal.

DEL

I know you. I'm very good with names but darn if I haven't forgotten it. You're with Mishawauka Fabrics, right?

NEAL

No. You stole my cab today.

DEL

I stole a cab today?
(dawns on him)
Oh, yeah! You tried to jump in my cab.

(aside)

I paid for my cab ride.

NEAL

Forget it. Excuse me.

He pushes around Del to the counter. Del feels badly that Neal may be upset with him.

DEL

Are we having a misunderstanding?

Neal ignores Del and hands his ticket to the agent.

DEL

The cab was just sitting there. I jumped in. Come to think of it, it was awfully easy to come by during rush hour. That was your cab?

NEAL

Yeah. Forget it.

DEL

I can't forget something like that.
I'll bet you're steamed with me.
Did you get here okay?

Neal looks at him. Says nothing.

DEL

I guess you did.

A SUPERVISOR steps behind the counter and speaks quietly to the agent. The agent hands Neal his ticket and boarding pass.

TICKET AGENT
Thank you.

He turns to the flight board, removes the departure time and replaces it with one that reads, DELAYED.

C.U. NEAL

He stares at the sign. The rush was for nothing.

INT. FLIGHT LOUNGE - LATER

Neal's sitting in one of the row seats reading a newspaper. As he turns a page, something catches his eye.

HIS POV

Del's directly across from him in the facing seats. He has a cigarette in his mouth, a cardboard food box with a pair of jumbo hot dogs in it. He's applying mustard from individual packets. He takes a final drag on the smoke, snuffs it out in the smoker, takes a huge bite of the hot dog and lets the cigarette smoke trail out his nose.

NEAL

He's revolted. He lifts his paper to shield him from the sight.

C.U. WALL CLOCK

It reads seven o'clock.

INT. FLIGHT LOUNGE

Neal's reading a magazine. He's in shirtsleeves. He lowers the magazine and sniffs. Some horrible odor's disturbing his reading. He looks down.

HIS POV

Stocking feet. One foot scratches the other. WE MOVE UP FROM THE FEET TO DEL. He's chomping on a toothpick, reading a pornographic novel.

NEAL

He goes back to his magazine.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

Neal walks in. We HEAR LOUD WHISTLING. Neal stops and looks.

HIS POV

Del's in his undershirt, face lathered, razor in hand. He looks across at Neal.

DEL
Howdy, traveler.

NEAL

He sighs and crosses to the urinal.

DEL

He continues shaving.

DEL
On the road quite a bit? I am. I know these airlines. An hour delay means an hour and a half.. Snow in Chi-town. It's the damn lake. All that moisture. Chicago goes and the whole national air transportation schedule takes a dump. I'm used to it. If you told me it was raining carmel corn in Chicago, I'd believe you. Bad weather town. Great pizza, the best hot dogs in the world, great parks. Damn nice zoo. Good aquarium, excellent art museum, although I've never been their personally. Knowledgable cab drivers. Good newspapers. Nice hotels. A bit high-priced but comfortable. You enjoy blues music? Blues? You like the blues?

He turns.

HIS POV

Neal's gone.

DEL

He's surprised that Neal's left. A little disappointed.
He's obviously a man who likes conversation. With anyone.
He shrugs, turns back to his shaving. He finishes his
conversation.

DEL

Very good tasting tap water.
Friendly, hard-working people...

INT. AIRPLANE

Neal's at the door of the plane arguing with a STEWARDESS.

NEAL

I couldn't discuss it with the
ticket agent because I didn't know
he put me in coach. I have a first
class ticket.

STEWARDESS

I'm sorry, I can't help you. First
class is full. Save your boarding
pass and you'll get a refund on the
difference.

NEAL

I don't want a refund, I want a seat
in first class. Where I belong.
Where I was booked and ticketed.

STEWARDESS

Sir, I can't help you. I have to
ask you to take your seat. I'm very
sorry.

NEAL

You delay me, you bump me. What's
next?

INT. AIRPLANE - COACH CLASS SEATS

Neal's in the middle seat. On one side of him is a WOMAN with
a BABY. On the other side is Del Griffith. Neal's burned,
fried, defeated, blown-out and comatose.

DEL

Is this a coincidence or what?

Neal doesn't say a word. Del offers his hand.

DEL

I never introduced myself. Del Griffith, American Light and Fixture, Director of Sales, shower curtain ring division. I sell shower curtain rings. The best in the world.

Neal looks at Del's outstretched hand. He sighs. It's going to be a terrible flight. As much as he'd like to tell Del to take a flyer, he can't. He's not that kind of man. He clasps Del's big, friendly paw.

NEAL

Neal Page.

Del pumps his hand.

DEL

Nice to know you. What's your business?

NEAL

Advertising.

DEL

Advertising? Super. I love advertising. I do a little of that game myself. Not officially. I help our customers with suggestions for their advertisements in trade journals and what not. If you've got a shower curtain in your home, there's a fifty percent chance that the rings holding it up were sold to your supplier by me, myself and I. I like to kid people that if it weren't for me and American Light and Fixture and the shower ring division, Janet Leigh probably wouldn't have caught her lunch in Psycho. You see that flick?

Neal nods yes.

DEL

I like to joke but that one was no joke. I was new to the business when that baby hit the silver screen and that shower murder left a crap stain on the reputation of shower curtains the size of Texas. Pebble glass shower doors took a big bite out of our sales for several years.

(MORE)

DEL (Cont'd)

We're back on our feet now. We're doing good. The young people going into their first homes don't have the same phobia about showers that their parents had. That Alfred Hitchcock. You know what that "Birds" film did to parakeet sales? El Dumbo, Jack. El Dumbo. Good friend of mine lost his shirt. You use curtains or doors in your home?

Neal stares at him.

DEL

Doors? Hell, it's no sweat off my back. I'm just happy to have someone to talk to. I finished my book about an hour ago. Filthy goddamn thing. When you travel as much as I do, you run out of reading material. If it's been published, I've read it. Fiction, nonfiction, the classics. Robbins, Krantz, Hailey, Spillane. You name it, I've read it. I got so hard-up last week on a layover in Atlanta, I read a biography of Prince. That's not his real name, by the way. It's Rogers Nelson.

Neal smiles and nods politely.

NEAL

I'm afraid I'm not much of a conversationalist. I like to take advantage of flight time to get a little work done.

DEL

Don't let me stand in your way. The last thing I want to be remembered as is an annoying blabbermouth.

Del reaches into the seat pocket in front of him and removes the airline magazine. Neal bends over and opens his crushed briefcase. He takes out a bound report. Del glances down at the briefcase.

DEL

What the heck happened to your briefcase? A bus run over it?

NEAL

Yeah.

DEL

I have a Samsonite. Bus ran over it once. Not a scratch. What'd you pay for that one?

NEAL

It was a gift.

DEL

Mine, too. Gift from the company for getting the shower ring contract for the U.S. Navy. You know how many rings that is?

NEAL

Alot.

DEL

Over a million.

Neal smiles and opens his report.

DEL

I figure that over the years several million sailors are going to use those showers with our rings and if they take the time to notice what kind of rings they are and they feel they're good rings, when they get out of the service and consider shower rings, they'll select ours. It's a shot. I look to the long-term. How about yourself?

NEAL

Yeah. Can you excuse me?

DEL

Sorry. I'm being a blabbermouth, aren't I?

NEAL

No, I'd just like to finish...

DEL

Tell me I'm a blabbermouth.

NEAL

You're not a blabbermouth.

DEL

I am. Tell me.

NEAL

It's alright. Really.

DEL
Come on. Say it.

NEAL
Alright. You're a blabbermouth.

Del stares at him. Hurt.

NEAL
Sorry. You told me to say it.

DEL
It's true. I'm the one who's sorry.
I won't say another word.

Neal sighs. Del's driving him mad.

NEAL
I really have to finish.

Del holds up his hand, cutting Neal off. He leans back in his seat and opens the magazine. Neal waits a beat and opens his report. They both read for a few moments. Del lowers his magazine.

DEL
You know why we're not taking off?
Chicago's socked in. Bet you three
bucks and my left nut.

EXT. CHICAGO - O'HARE AIRPORT

The airport is nearly lost to a blizzard. All modes of transportation are dead.

INT. PLANE - LATER

Del's sound asleep, mouth open, snoring. Neal's sipping coffee, going over papers. He sets down the report and looks at his watch. He looks at Del.

HIS POV

Del's facing him, eyes closed, mouth open.

C.U. NEAL

Staring at Del.

HIS POV

Del opens his eyes.

DEL

Six bucks and my right nut we're not landing in Chicago.

INT. WICHITA AIRPORT - CORRIDOR

Neal's on a pay phone.

NEAL

Why am I in Wichita? Because we couldn't land in Chicago.

(pause)

I know it's snowing. That's why we couldn't land.

(pause)

I have no idea. All the airlines said was we're refueling and continuing on to Chicago. They're probably lying but what else can I do?

INT. AIRPORT - DEL

He's in a flight lounge, sitting, smoking, watching Neal.

HIS POV

Neal's across the corridor, talking on the phone.

C.U. DEL

He yawns.

NEAL

He looks at his watch and wraps up the conversation.

NEAL

It's quarter to eleven. Go back to sleep. I'll be fine. I have a key. You go to sleep. Okay? I love you. Okay. Bye.

He hangs up the phone. He curses under his breath and starts back down the corridor. Del calls to him.

DEL

Neal? There's no way on Earth we're taking off from here tonight.

Neal stops and turns. Del gets up from his seat and shuffles into the corridor.

DEL

I may not know the price of eggs in Sweden, but I know the U.S. air transport system and when you waylay to Wichita enroute to Chicago, you're up the creek. I'd venture to say Old Man Winter's busting records in Chicago right now.

Neal's a little worried that Del may be right. But he's not prepared to take any advice.

NEAL

I guess I'll find out soon enough.

DEL

By the time you wait for the airlines to pull the plug on the flight, which they will sooner or later, you'll have an easier time finding a three-legged ballerina than a hotel room. I know Wichita. I know airlines. I know the hotel scene. They start diverting flights here and you don't book a room, you're looking at a couple nights on a dirty floor.

NEAL

You're saying I'll be stuck in Wichita?

DEL

I'm saying you are stuck in Wichita.

C.U. NEAL

A look of alarm.

INT. AIRPORT - FLIGHT LOUNGE

Neal's standing at the window, looking out on the field. There's a weary crowd milling about, waiting for news.

INT. AIRPORT - FLIGHT LOUNGE - BOARDING COUNTER

An airline REPRESENTATIVE addresses the crowd over the PA.

REP

I'm sorry to inform you that we're canceling flight 105 due to severe weather difficulties in Chicago. Representatives will be arriving shortly to assist you in making further arrangements. On behalf of everyone at the airlines, we're sorry. Thank you.

he clicks off and prepares for the onslaught.

C.U. NEAL

He rests his head against the cold glass.

NEAL

Shit...

INT. BAGGAGE AREA

Del's dragging his trunk across the floor to the doors. He has his sample case, suitcase and briefcase resting on it. Neal's at the door with his two suiter over his arm, his crushed briefcase under his other arm. Del stops, straightens up and addresses him.

DEL

How many times have I been right so far?

NEAL

I've lost count.

DEL

Did you book a room?

Neal shakes his head, no.

DEL

Did you try?

NEAL

Every place in the book.

DEL

Filled?

NEAL
To the rafters.

DEL
I've slept on many an airport floor
in my life and times.

He drags the case the rest of the way to the doors.

DEL
I've been waylaid more times than I
can remember. A day here, two days
there. Once I was stuck in Salt
Lake for four days waiting to get
into Denver. I prepare.

NEAL
You got a room?

DEL
As soon as I got off the plane. You
called home, I called the Interstate
Inn.

NEAL
I missed that one.

DEL
Most people do. But they'll be
plenty popular tonight.

NEAL
Well, see you around. I'm going
across the way to the Hilton and get
a bite to eat.

DEL
Coffee shop closes at eleven.

NEAL
Eleven?

DEL
On the nose. People in this berg
live by the clock. I'll tell you
what, I know the manager of the
Interstate Inn pretty well. Sold
him the rings in his showers. You
pick up the cab fare, I'll see that
he puts you up.

For the first time in hours, Neal brightens.

DEL
Grab an end, will ya?

Neal sets his briefcase on top of the trunk and lifts his end.

NEAL

Jesus Christ! What've you got in
here? Rocks?

DEL

When I go out on the road, I go out
on the road.

They lumber the trunk out the doors to the cab stand.

NEAL

How far is this place?

DEL

Just up the road a piece.

C.U. TAXI METER

It reads \$124.50.

INT. CAB - BACKSEAT

Del and Neal are in the back of the old Checker.

DEL

I'll tell you, Adolf Hitler would
have been appalled at this broad's
morals. I mean she was bad. I
don't think there's a word that's
been invented to describe...

NEAL

Where the hell is this place?

Del leans forward and talks to the driver.

DEL

How much further, Angus?

DRIVER

Not much.

DEL

Why didn't you take the interstate?

DRIVER

You said your friend's never been
here. I thought he might like to
have a look around. You don't see
nothin' on the interstate but
interstate.

Del leans back in the seat.

NEAL
(lowers his voice)
It's the middle of the night.

DEL
(softly)
He's proud of his town. That's
pretty darn rare these days.

NEAL
You know him?

DEL
I been on the road many years, my
friend.

EXT. HOTEL

Just off the highway. An anonymous cinderblock rectangle.
The kind of place you stay in once. Emergency shelter.
Trucks parked everywhere. The taxi pulls in.

INT. LOBBY

Fake wood and naugahyde. A tiny front desk, two sofas, a rack
of tourist info, a pay phone, a newspaper box and an easel
with a cardboard sign with words in glitter -- DON PELTRAM'S
ACCORDION HIJINX. Del and Neal lug the truck into the lobby
and set it down. The DESK CLERK stands up from his chair
where he's sitting watching TV.

DEL
Evening, Gus.

CLERK
Del Griffith? How the hell are you?

DEL
I'm still a million bucks shy of
being a millionaire. How are you?

GUS
I was doing pretty good there for a
while but Sunday I pissed my pants
during "60 Minutes" so I guess I
gotta go back in for more plumbing
work. I got your room all ready for
you.

DEL

Great, Gus. I'd like you to meet an old friend of mine. This is Neal Page. Neal, this is Gus Mooney.

Gus reaches his hand across the desk. Neal shakes it.

NEAL

Glad to meet you.

GUS

Likewise.

DEL

We were flying into Chicago from New York and a storm brought us here.

GUS

I know all about it. I musta got half your flight already booked in. Now tell me, Del, am I just getting old or are they letting fat gals be stewardesses these days?

DEL

Times change, Gus. I told Neal you'd be able to fix him up.

Gus clucks his tongue.

GUS

You know, Del, I'd rather shoot arrows out my ass than disappoint you or a friend of yours but I'm booked solid. I got three of those fat gals sharing a single as it is. One twin and two cots and them cots are really built for youngsters.

Neal looks at Del with a sigh.

DEL

Nothing, Gus?

GUS

If old Herbert Hoover come back from the dead and needed a room for the night, I couldn't help him. Sorry.

NEAL

That's alright, I'll just go back.

DEL

You spend a hundred and a half getting here. You want to blow that and more to sleep at the airport?

NEAL
It's no problem.

DEL
If you don't mind a little snoring,
you can bunk with me.

NEAL
That's alright. I'll be fine.

DEL
I don't mind.

NEAL
It's okay.

DEL
I'm straight as an arrow.

Neal chuckles.

DEL
It's no skin off my nose if you
sleep in a chair.

GUS
If you're going back, you better let
me know so I can call you a cab.
We're pretty far out. It'll take a
good while.

DEL
You may as well stay.

NEAL
I can't impose on you like that.

DEL
Tell you what. You pick up the room
tab and I won't be imposed on one
iota.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

It's dark, the door opens and Del walks in. He turns on the
light. Neal looks in. His face drops.

HIS POV

A tiny room with a double bed.

NEAL AND DEL

NEAL IS HORRIFIED. DEL'S EXCITED.

.
DEL
New bedspreads!

INT. MOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - SHOWER

Neal's standing in the shower with his face to the spray. He enjoys the relaxing heat and clean. Something occurs to him. He moves his head out of the spray and looks up.

HIS POV

The shower curtain rings.

INT. ROOM

Del's in his pajamas. He takes a pillow from out of his trunk and a photograph. He looks at it fondly.

C.U. PHOTO

It's of a young woman. Friendly and comfy, not very pretty but full of life and smiling like a Crest ad. The photo's probably fifteen years old.

INT. ROOM

Del kisses the picture and sets it on the nightstand next to the bed. He closes the trunk and slides it against the wall. He takes his dopp kit out of the suitcase, closes it, sets it on top of the trunk and turns on the TV. He dials in a religious program. He slips a quarter into the bed vibrator and lays down.

INT. SHOWER

Neal reaches for the soap. Stops short.

HIS POV

The soap dish. a tiny bar of soap covered with hair.

C.U. NEAL

He carefully holds the disgusting bar of soap to the spray to wash the hair away.

INT. BED

Del's enjoying a good vibration. A beat and there's a knock on the door. Del crosses to the door and opens it. It's a pimply pizza delivery BOY. He has a large pizza and six-pack of beer.

DEL

How much?

BOY

Nine bucks.

Del takes the pizza and the beer. He sets the pizza on top of his suitcase and the six-pack on the vibrating bed. He looks around for his wallet. He sees Neal's pants hanging over the chair. He hesitates for a moment, throws a look to the bathroom, fishes out the wallet, extracts a ten and gives it to the boy.

DEL

Keep it.

BOY

A dollar?

DEL

100 pennies. All yours.

BOY

You got any more?

DEL

Nope.

BOY

Okay. Thanks.

Del closes the door. He crosses to the pizza and opens the box.

C.U. PIZZA

The ugliest pizza ever made. Cheese, sausage, olives, green peppers, jalapenos, kraut, bacon, beans, corn, anchovies.

INT. ROOM

Del scoops a piece of the abomination out of the box.

DEL
Dinner's here!

INT. BATHROOM - SHOWER

Neal pulls open the curtain to reveal a completely sacked bathroom. Towels on the floor, sink half-filled with soapy water, toothpaste on the counter top, flecks in the mirror, toilet paper unraveled, Del's bathrobe on the back of the door.

C.U. NEAL

He's revolted, looks for a towel.

HIS POV

From a wad of used towels in a puddle on the floor to a towel rack with two washcloths. A hand reaches for them.

C.U. NEAL

He tries his hair with washcloths.

INT. ROOM

Del's in the vibrating bed, eating pizza, watching TV. A few beats and the bed stops vibrating. Neal comes out of the bathroom in his boxer shorts.

NEAL
Do you realize that you used all the towels?

DEL
I'm pretty big and they were pretty small. I'm sorry. It wasn't too neighborly of me.

NEAL
And almost all the toilet paper.

DEL
Those New York hot dogs. I'm guilty.

NEAL
You left the bathroom a filthy mess.

DEL
I'm not used to a roommate.

Neal sniffs. Makes a horrible face.

NEAL
What smells?

DEL
The pizza came.

NEAL
That's pizza?

DEL
It's good. I saved you a piece.

NEAL
You didn't order me a salad? I asked you to.

DEL
They didn't have salad. I had him put extra vegetables on the pizza.

NEAL
Beautiful...

He crosses to the box and looks into it. He makes another face and takes the box around to the front of the bed and sits down. He scoops out the last slice. He takes a bite.

NEAL
Mmm. Horrible. If I wasn't so hungry, I'd throw up.

DEL
Wash it down with a beer.

Neal sets the pizza down and pulls a beer off the six-pack.

NEAL
Warm?

DEL
It comes out warm, what the hell difference does it make how it goes in? Toss me one.

Neal tosses Del the beer. He takes another. He and Del open simultaneously. The vibrating bed has sufficiently shaken the beer to provide a double beer explosion.

INT. ROOM - LATER

The lights are out. Del and Neal are in bed. It's quiet.

DEL

I'd switch pillows with you but I'd sneeze all night. I carry my own pillow. It's hypoallergenic. I had no idea those beers were going to blow like that.

NEAL

You had the beer on a vibrating bed. What'd you think was going to happen?

DEL

It's been a long day. It didn't occur to me.

NEAL

It didn't occur to you so I have to sleep in a puddle of beer.

DEL

I'm sleeping in pizza. You want to switch?

NEAL

No. I want to sleep.

DEL

Same here. I'm bushed.

NEAL

Good night.

DEL

Sleep tight.

There's a long pause. Del strikes a match and lights a cigarette.

NEAL

What're you doing?

DEL

Having a butt.

NEAL

In bed?

DEL

Do you have a problem with that?

NEAL
A big problem.

DEL
I'm not going to fall asleep.

NEAL
I'd rather not risk it. I don't smoke. Smoke annoys me. Especially in the dark, in bed.

DEL
I always have a smoke before I fall asleep.

Neal switches on the light.

NEAL
I was on my way home to spend a nice holiday and five days off with my family and instead I'm in a motel bed with a stranger five hundred miles away from my house and I don't know how or when I'll get there. I'm a patient man. I'm paying for the room. I paid for the cab...

DEL
You paid for the pizza, too.

NEAL
I did?

DEL
All I had was a hundred. The kid didn't have change.

NEAL
You went in my wallet?

DEL
Are you mad?

NEAL
You have no right to go in my wallet!

DEL
What was I supposed to do? I had to pay for the pizza. You were showering. Did you want me to send some punk kid in to look at your dick?

NEAL
You stay out of my stuff.

DEL
(offended)
I'm not interested in your stuff.

NEAL
Good.

DEL
In fact, I'm bored with your stuff.

NEAL
What? You looked?

DEL
I didn't look.

NEAL
Then why are you bored with it?

DEL
(lying)
It's a figure of speech.

NEAL
Bullshit! You went through my bags!

Del jumps on the defensive.

DEL
How did I know you weren't some kind of shady guy? I'm not sleeping with a stranger without knowing a little about him. What if you had a gun in your bag? I been on the road too long to not know to take a precaution or two.

NEAL
Did I go through your stuff?

DEL
I don't know. Did you?

NEAL
No, I did not! And I'm mad as hell that you went through mine.

DEL
Two suits, two dirty shirts, some stale shorts and some skin magazines.

Neal's embarrassed.

DEL

Don't sweat it, Neal. There's a reason every hotel newsstand sells those kind of magazines. There isn't a married man alive that hasn't...

NEAL

You done with your goddamn cigarette?

Del takes one last puff. He drops it in a beer can and swishes it out.

DEL

Done.

Neal turns off the light. He settles back into the bed. There's another long pause.

DEL

Neal?

NEAL

What!

DEL

I have got to fart something fierce.

Neal turns on the light. He's furious. He grabs his pants and slips them on.

DEL

Hey! I'm just being honest, for Christ's sake! I could have sneaked it on you.

Neal grabs his shirt.

DEL

Where're you going?

NEAL

I'm sleeping in the lobby.

DEL

Aw, come on! I'll go in the john.

He pulls back the covers and slides his legs over the side of the bed.

DEL
If your kid shits his trousers do
you smack him?

Neal stops at the door. He throws a look at Del.

NEAL
What the hell are you talking about?

DEL
You're not a very tolerant person.

NEAL
I'm a very tolerant person.

DEL
Oh, really?

NEAL
Look, you've been under my skin
since New York. You ripped off my
cab...

DEL
I know all this. You paid for
the room, the pizza...you're a
tight-ass.

NEAL
How'd you like a mouthful of teeth?

DEL
You're hostile, too. Nice
personality combination. Hostile
and intolerant. That's borderline
criminal.

NEAL
Screw you! You spill beer all over
the bed, you smoke, you make a mess
of the bathroom...

NEAL
And I let you stay in my room. I
let you pay for it so you wouldn't
feel like an intruder which you most
certainly are.

NEAL
I'm an intruder?

DEL
You're an intruder. I was having a
nice trip until you walked into my
life.

NEAL
I walked into your life?

DEL
With golf shoes on!

NEAL
Who talked my ear off on the plane?

DEL
Who told you to book a room? Out of
the goodness of my dumb old heart,
I offered you help. You're an
ungrateful jackass. Go sleep in the
lobby. Go ahead. I hope you wake up
so stiff you can't move.

Neal hesitates at the door.

NEAL
You saw me coming. You're no saint.
You get a free room. Free cab.
And somebody who'll listen to your
boring stories.

Del glares at Neal.

DEL
You want to hurt me? Go ahead. If
it makes you feel better...be my
guest. I'm an easy target. I like
people, Neal. I even like you.
People are my business. They're my
business because I've made them my
business. Yeah, I talk too much.
I also listen too much. You can be
a cold-hearted cynic. I don't care.
Think what you want about me. I'm
not changing. I like me. My wife
likes me. My customers like me.
Because I'm the real article. I'm a
human being. Flaws, fat and farts.
I'm flesh and blood.

C.U. NEAL

He feels like the last slice of a loaf of bread.

C.U. DEL

He's serious and genuine.

INT. ROOM

Neal closes the door and walks back to the bed. He steps out of his pants and gets in bed. He turns out the light. Del slips back into bed. They both settle in.

NEAL

Sorry.

DEL

(after a long pause)

So am I.

NEAL

Night.

DEL

Sleep tight.

INT. HALLWAY

The pizza boy's still hanging around. He puts his ear to the door and listens. He reaches into his back pocket and withdraws a room key.

EXT. HOTEL - MORNING

it's even uglier in the daylight. In the middle of nothing.

INT. BEDROOM - C.U. DEL AND NEAL

Sleeping. Tight as spoons. Del has his arm around Neal's chest. Neal's holding Del's hand. Del's face is in the crook of Neal's neck. Nestled tight and warm. They're both sleeping sweet and satisfied. Del snuggles and nibbles Neal's earlobe with his dry lips. Neal smiles in his sleep. A beat and the smile relaxes. Somewhere in his unconscious mind, he senses something's not right. Another beat and Neal opens his eyes. He thinks for a moment. He slowly brings Del's hand up to his face and looks at it. Del's eyes open. He looks around, orients himself. He knows something's terribly wrong.

DEL

Neal?

NEAL

Del?

DEL

Why are you holding my hand?

NEAL
Why did you kiss my ear?

DEL
I don't know.

NEAL
Where's your other hand?

DEL
(worried)
I'm not sure.

NEAL
Find it, Del!

Del thinks another beat. His hand emerges from under Neal's pillow.

NEAL
On the count of three. One...

DEL
Two...

NEAL AND DEL
THREE!

INT. ROOM

Del and Neal burst out of the bed, screaming and shivering with revulsion.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Del and Neal are eating breakfast.

DEL
The airlines are lying. While you were in the shower, I watched a little "Today Show" and Willard Scott said it's still snowing in Chicago. If they told you flights are going out to Chicago, they're trying to sell you a seat.

NEAL
I'll go wait it out.

DEL
You want to be in Chicago by tonight?

NEAL
At the outside.

DEL
That's a stretch. I think if you plan on tomorrow morning you're still tugging your tamale.

NEAL
I'm not spending Thanksgiving in Wichita.

DEL
Worse things have happened. Ask any wartime resident of Dresden.

NEAL
That's not fair. I got a family waiting for me to come home.

DEL
You and everybody else.

NEAL
I'm home tomorrow come hell or high water.

DEL
Which do you prefer? I'm going with the high water myself. If you think the airliner gives two craps and doorbell chimes if you eat turkey with your family tomorrow, you're deluded.

NEAL
That's a switch. You're the biggest humanist.

DEL
I'm also a realist. You want to get home?

NEAL
I want and I will get home.

DEL
Not on an airplane. If it stops snowing right now, O'Hare'll take a good five or six hours to get into operation. Then there's 24 hours of air traffic backed-up. Anyway you slice it, the odds are you and me are eating turkey right here.

An anorexic WAITRESS cruises by, refills their coffee cups and drops off the check.

DEL
If we wait for a flight. .

NEAL
How the hell else will we get home?

DEL
I've got a buddy at Amtrak.

NEAL
Train?

DEL
Why the hell not?

Neal shrugs. He smiles.

DEL
I'm sure everything's booked solid.
But I'm pretty close to this guy.

NEAL
Sold him his shower curtain rings?

DEL
On every damn train.

Del grabs the check. Neal snatches it away from him.

NEAL
I've paid for everything else, why
break precedent.

DEL
Hey, I'm starting to feel like a
freeloader here.

NEAL
You get me on the train and you're
no freeloader.

DEL
We'll get a sleeper and you can hold
my hand again.

Neal laughs. He reaches for his wallet and opens it. It's empty. His laughter ends abruptly. He looks angrily at Del.

DEL
What?

NEAL

You know goddamn well, what!

DEL

I'm sorry, I don't.

Neal shows him his empty wallet.

NEAL

I had seven hundred dollars in
here!

DEL

I don't have your dough, Neal. I'm
alot of things but I'm not a thief.

NEAL

You went through my stuff last
night, didn't you? Huh?

DEL

I didn't touch your money! And I
don't care for the accusation.

NEAL

Well, I had seven hundred dollars in
here. You went into it for the
pizza. Maybe you...

Del digs his hand into his back pocket and whips out his
fat, worn, brown leather wallet. He slaps it on the table.

DEL

Count it!

NEAL

Like you'd keep it in your wallet if
you stole it.

DEL

There's two hundred and sixty-three
dollars in there. If there's a
dollar more you can call me a thief.

NEAL

That doesn't prove a damn thing!

DEL

Count it!

Neal picks up the wallet and opens it. He looks in the money
section.

DEL
Two hundred and sixty-three...

NEAL
It's empty.

DEL
Doll...huh?

NEAL
Dry.

Del grabs the wallet from him. He looks in it. He glares at Neal.

DEL
Where is it?

NEAL
I'm looking for mine!

DEL
Well, now mine's gone!

NEAL
I'm out seven hundred and you're out...

DEL
Two hundred and sixty-three dollars.

They look at each other for a long beat.

NEAL
You swear you didn't lift my dough?

DEL
You didn't life mine?

NEAL
I didn't touch yours.

DEL
I didn't touch yours.

NEAL
Where is it?

DEL
Could we have been robbed?

NEAL
By who?

DEL
Did you lock the door when you came back to bed?

NEAL
It's always locked.

DEL
The chin-lock?

Neal thinks. He shakes his head.

NEAL
I don't think so.

DEL
We had a visitor.

NEAL
Oh, Jesus.

DEL
Do you have any money?

Neal reaches in his pocket. He takes out a few crumpled bills and some change. Del reaches in his pocket. He comes up with a dollar. Neal looks at the check.

NEAL
Six fifty.

Del counts out the money. He calls the waitress over.

DEL
Hon? You charged us for bacon?

She looks at the check.

WAITRESS
Yeah.

DEL
We didn't get it.

WAITRESS
Sure you did.

DEL
If we got it, we'd have bacon on our breath. Right?

WAITRESS
I don't know.

DEL
Of course we would. Bend over and take a whiff.

The waitress rears back.

WAITRESS
No way.

DEL
We're not paying for something we didn't get. It's your word against our word and our breath. Just take a whiff. Neal?

Neal looks at him curiously. Del opens his mouth. Neal follows suit. The waitress clucks her tongue and yanks the check off the table.

WAITRESS
I know I brought your bacon because two slices fell off and I remember putting them back on the plate.

DEL
Well, honey, I'm with the agriculture department and I think you'd rather tell your boss you made a mistake on our bill than have me tell my boss you serve dirty bacon.

She quickly scratches off the bacon and retotals.

DEL
And for your information and edification, you know what that means?

WAITRESS
No.

DEL
You look it up when you get home. We didn't get our bacon. Somebody else must have gotten it and you better hope they don't catch something and die.

The waitress puts the check down on the table.

DEL
Alright, let's address the hair in the orange juice.

She picks up the check and tears it in two.

EXT. MOTEL

Del and Neal are sitting on Del's trunk in front of the motel.

EXT. MOTEL - DEL AND NEAL

They're chatting, waiting.

DEL

What'd your wife say?

NEAL

She thinks I'm crazy.

DEL

That goes with the territory.

NEAL

Yeah.

DEL

Fortunately we're dealing with a small time crook. He didn't bother with the credit cards. We'll charge our way home. What kind of plastic do you carry?

NEAL

American Express, Mastercharge, Visa, oil cards, Diner's Club.
What do you carry?

DEL

Sears, J.C. Penney, AAA.

NEAL

No bank cards?

DEL

I try to deal in cash.

NEAL

In light of what happened I imagine you'll rethink that one.

DEL

I don't make a habit of leaving the door unlocked. You have any checks?

NEAL

My wife keeps the checkbook. You?

DEL

Strictly cash. I travel too much to write checks. 99% of them would be out of state and an out of state check is about as welcome as a priest in a whorehouse.

NEAL

You get us to the train station, I'll take care of everything else.

DEL

Gus said he'd call his son down to give us a lift.

Del looks at his watch.

DEL

He should have been here.

NEAL

Why didn't you just borrow some dough from Gus?

DEL

He doesn't have a pot to piss in. I can't take money from him.

NEAL

You could wire it to him.

DEL

I have a long standing policy against borrowing money from friends.

NEAL

But it's okay to borrow from strangers like me, huh?

DEL

It's incentive for you to become a friend.

EXT. MOTEL

An old pick-up truck pulls up in front of the motel and blows its horn.

NEAL AND DEL

They look at the truck, then at each other.

NEAL
Is that him?

Del calls to the driver.

DEL
Are you Gus's son?

HIS POV

A strange, gangly young man, OWEN, looks out the truck at him. Beside him is a TWO-YEAR-OLD standing on the seat and his WIFE with a BABY in her arms.

OWEN
I'm Owen. You the shower curtain ring fella?

EXT. MOTEL

Del and Neal get up from the trunk.

DEL
That's me, Del Griffith and this is Neal Page.

OWEN
Pleased to meet you both. This is my kid and that's my wife and that's my baby.

Neal and Del nod to the wife.

OWEN
You don't gotta say nothin' to her. She's dumb as a melon and she don't remember nothin'. I'm to drive you to Wichita to catch the Amtrak?

DEL
Yeah. I really appreciate it.

He and Neal stoop to lift the trunk.

OWEN
Don't bother with that.

He turns and barks at the wife.

OWEN
Get out there and put that trunk in the back!

Neal and Del quickly intercede.

NEAL
We got it.

OWEN
She don't mind. She's short and
skinny but she's strong.

DEL
No, no. We're fine.

They lift the trunk and hoist it into the trunk. Barely.
They quickly load the other things.

NEAL
We riding back here?

DEL
I guess.

NEAL
Do you know how much this suit cost?

OWEN
Come on up front!
(barks at the wife)
Get you and them kids in back so the
guests ride up here out of the cold.

The wife opens the door to get out. Del and Neal jump into
the truck.

NEAL
No problem. We're fine.

OWEN
She don't mind. She resists the
cold real good.

DEL
So do we and we love it! Let's go!

Owen throws the truck in gear and it lurches forward.

EXT. DOWNTOWN WICHITA - TRAIN DEPOT

The truck pulls up at the depot. Del and Neal are frozen.
Their hair is standing on end. They slowly rise and step
down from the truck. Owen and his wife get out of the truck
and walk around to the back. Owen opens the gate. His
teensy wife picks up the trunk and carries it into the depot.
Del and Neal grab the other bags with frozen fingers.

EXT. DEPOT - TRAIN

Neal gives Del his ticket.

NEAL
They didn't have two together.
So...

DEL
No problem.

Neal offers his hand. Del takes it.

NEAL
If I don't see you again, take care.

DEL
You too. But I'll probably see you
on the train.

NEAL
I'm going to sleep if I can. But
anyway, it's been kind of fun.

DEL
It was a laugh. Good luck to you.
And thanks. Oh! Shit! Give your
address so I can pay you back for
the ticket.

NEAL
The ticket's a gift.

DEL
Come on. Give me your address.

NEAL
Del, it's a gift.

DEL
Give me your phone number so at
least I can find out if you got
home okay.

NEAL
I'll get home okay. But thanks for
the concern. See ya, pal.

Neal pats Del on the back and boards the train. Del watches
him board. There's a little sadness. He misses Neal already.
He looks at his ticket and waddles down the siding. He boards
another car.

INT. THEIR CAR

Neal places his briefcase in the overhead baggage compartment and sits down in the window seat. He settles into the seat. He sighs with relief. Glad to be seated, glad to be headed home. Glad to be rid of Del. Not in a mean way. Just glad to be on his own, going back to his own life. He closes his eyes.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE

The Amtrak train flies down the tracks across the frosty plains.

INT. TRAIN CAR

Neal's sleeping. His face is turned to the window. He stirs and rolls his head to the other side. Right into the snoring mug of Del Griffith. He opens his eyes and rears back. He recovers from the surprise and slumps in defeat. He shakes his head and sighs. He can't shake the big dude. He leans his head back and closes his eyes. There's a jolt. He opens his eyes and looks out the window.

HIS POV

The countryside isn't flashing by the window as quickly as it was before.

C.U. NEAL

Disappointment washes down all over his face.

HIS POV

The countryside isn't flashing past at all. The train's dead on the tracks.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - TRAIN

Smoke's billowing out of the engine. A perplexed crew is watching the fire.

EXT. JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

The Missouri capital.

EXT. BUS DEPOT

The Greyhound main terminal.

INT. BUS DEPOT

Del and Neal are sitting on benches in the seedy terminal.

DEL AND NEAL

Del looks at Neal. Neal's bubbling with anger. He looks at his watch. Del looks at him.

DEL

It's not my fault the train caught on fire.

Neal looks at him. He's not so sure.

DEL

Thank your lucky stars it didn't derail. They derail more often than they catch fire.

NEAL

It's three fifteen.

DEL

The bus leaves at four. We're alright. We'll get into Chicago late tonight. You worry too much. Have you ever thought of going with the flow?

NEAL

I am going with the flow and you're what floated into my life.

DEL

If it weren't for me, Mr. Ungrateful, you'd still be at the Wichita airport.

NEAL

Instead I'm in the Jefferson City bus terminal. Tell me how that's an improvement?

DEL

You're a couple hundred miles closer to home.

NEAL

And I'm out seven hundred bucks
cash, two hundred in train
tickets...

DEL

They're mailing you a refund.

NEAL

Alot of good that does us here.

DEL

You're in a pretty lousy mood, huh?

NEAL

To say the least.

DEL

You ever traveled by bus?

Neal shakes his head, no.

DEL

Your mood's probably not going to
improve much.

INT. BUS

Jammed with cut-rate passengers. Screaming BABIES, luggage everywhere, food wrappers, a dozen SERVICEMEN with their Walkman's leaking twelve different songs. CHILDREN cruising the aisles. The engine is ROARING. Someone has a window open. It's hell on wheels.

DEL AND NEAL

They're toward the back. Neal has a seat in his lap. The person in front of him has the seat all the way back and is sleeping. Del's eating popcorn. Neal's staring out the filthy window. Del pokes Neal. Neal looks at him. Del jerks his head toward the seats opposite them. Neal looks.

HIS POV

A sleazy, young couple are furiously necking in the seats. His hands are all over her. Inside her clothes, outside her clothes, squeezing, rubbing, stroking.

DEL AND NEAL

They're both watching.

DEL
Beats a movie, huh?

Neal stares at him.

DEL
Beggars can't be choosers, Neal.
It's better than walking.

NEAL
Barely.

DEL
Don't get your jugs in a twist.

A child's hand squeezes between Del and Neal's seats and fishes around.

DEL
This is probably as good a time as any to tell you something.

Neal leans back to avoid the child's dirty, probing fingers.

NEAL
What now?

DEL
You'll probably be relieved. Seeing as how you're not enjoying bus travel.

NEAL
(suspicious)
What?

DEL
Our tickets are only good to St. Louis.

Neal's jaw drops.

DEL
St. Louis into Chi is booked tighter than Tom Thumb's ass.
It's Thanksgiving.

C.U. PHOTOGRAPH

A picture of a turkey dinner. We MOVE OFF the photo and up to Neal. He's on the phone.

NEAL

I'm in St. Louis. Why? Because I've always wanted to tour the Anheiser-Busch Brewery. Come on, Sue.

(pause)

I'm sorry. It's been hell. I got hooked-up with this shower ring salesman. I told you about him last night. Every time I listen to him...

(pause)

Why do I listen to him? Good question. I'm stuck. No money. Everything's booked-up. I'm in the bus station. I'm tired and hungry and I'm mad.

(pause)

I want to get home. I can't fly in. I've tried every airline. There isn't a seat left on anything. This is the busiest travel day of the year.

Neal turns into the terminal.

HIS POV

Del's talking with a group of kids.

NEAL

He turns back to the booth.

NEAL

I think I'll just rent a car and drive home. It's about eight hours. Honey, I can drive alone. I'm not that tired. I'm not driving home with Del. I don't care if he can share the driving, if I have him along, something'll go wrong. I know it. I don't trust him an inch.

INT. TERMINAL - DEL

He's talking with the kids.

DEL

You don't know what an AT&T calling card is? Where have you been? You go to school?

KID

No.

DEL

You can call anywhere in the world
with it.

KID

So?

DEL

Free. Long distance calls for free.
You don't see the value of something
like that?

KID

No.

NEAL

He wraps up his conversation.

NEAL

Tell the kids that I'll be home.
I'll be fine. Don't worry about a
thing. I'll call next chance I get.
Huh? I called collect because I
lost my AT&T card. Whoever took my
money must have taken the calling
card and my Visa.

INT. TERMINAL - DEL

He's still hawking the kids.

DEL

The Visa card's gonna cost you
double the calling card.

KID

I don't have a hundred bucks.

DEL

What kind of delinquent are you?
Small timer. Real small time. I
thought you were a heavy hitter.

KID

I got seventy-five.

DEL

Sold.

INT. BUS STATION RESTAURANT

Del and Neal are eating lunch.

DEL

That watch belonged to my father and his father before him. You want to feel hurt, sell a family heirloom for seventy-five beans.

NEAL

You didn't have to sell it.

DEL

I've steered you wrong so many times, I felt like a shit burger on a steak bun. The least I could do was scrape up a nice meal for you.

NEAL

Thanks.

DEL

How's the wife?

NEAL

Fine.

DEL

Kids miss their Daddy?

Neal smiles.

DEL

I called an old friend at Eastern Airlines. He says the chances of getting a flight into Chicago from here are about the same as a mouse sexually satisfying a black rhino.

NEAL

I know. I called all the airlines.

DEL

Did you call your office? Maybe they have some clout. You have a company plane?

NEAL

No. The office closed at noon.

DEL

I have some friends in town. We could probably...

Neal lays the news on Del.

NEAL
I've been thinking, Del.

DEL
That's good. This country was built
on man's thoughts.

NEAL
When we put our heads together we
get nowhere. I think I'm holding
you up.

DEL
I'm enjoying your company. You're
not that bad. You don't react to
crisis very well, but I can overlook
that. You have plenty of other
admirable traits.

NEAL
I think we'd probably both get home
alot sooner if we split up.

Del's face drops. He's hurt. He's enjoying the adventure.

NEAL
One can go faster than two. You
have friends here. They'll probably
be much more inclined to help you
alone than help the two of us.

DEL
Not necessarily. They're good
people.

NEAL
Why risk it? We'll go alot faster
working as singles.

DEL
You really think so?

NEAL
Yeah.

Del looks down at his plate.

DEL
Okay.

There's a long pause.

DEL
I'm a pain in the ass in other words.

NEAL
No, not at all, Del.

DEL
Yeah, I am. Everything I touch turns to shit. This isn't the first time. My mother used to tell me I had twice as much heart as brain.

He looks up at Neal.

DEL
I was only trying to help.

NEAL
I know, Del. And I appreciate it.

Del drops his napkin on his plate. He looks at the check, lays down the appropriate sum plus tip. He counts out half the remaining money and puts it in his pocket. He gets up and stuffs the other half in Neal's suitcoat pocket. He pats him on the shoulder.

NEAL
I can't take your money.

DEL
Take it. Buy the kids a chocolate turkey. Tell them it's from an old huckster. Good luck, pal.

He shuffles out of the restaurant. Neal watches him go.
A sad smile.

EXT. ST. LOUIS AIRPORT

Jammed with activity.

INT. AIRPORT - RENTAL CAR COUNTER

It's jammed with people. Huge lines. Deafening din. Neal's at the counter filling out the forms.

EXT. AIRPORT - ARRIVAL AREA

Neal's at the curb with a group of people waiting for the courtesy bus. For the first time since the GM building,

he's smiling. He's so light in spirit, he strikes up a conversation with a frail, young man next to him.

NEAL

(to the man next to him)
You have no idea what I've been through to get to this point.

MAN

You have no idea what I've been through.

NEAL

It can't come close to what I've been through.

MAN

I had my foot amputated on Thursday.

Neal is shocked.

MAN

I left the hospital in New York to go to Chicago to be with my sister and we got waylaid to Wichita, I got on Amtrak, the train caught fire. I hitchhiked to St. Louis, went to the bus terminal to try to take the bus to Chicago, I discovered along the way somebody's picked my pocket, lifted my wallet. All I had was eighty dollars, I bought a Visa card off a kid in the terminal and illegally used it to rent a car.

NEAL

Other than that, you looking forward to the holiday?

MAN

Oh, very much so.

INT. COURTESY BUS

One of those vans with the sofas and lamps. It's packed with weary travelers. Neal included. He's squeezed in between two nuns. The van jerks to a stop. A BURLY BLACK DRIVER calls out Neal's name.

DRIVER

Mr. Page?

Neal gets up and squishes his way up to the front. The driver hands Neal his rental agreement envelope and a set of keys.

DRIVER
Red Mustang. Space E-67.

NEAL
Thanks. Have a nice holiday.

DRIVER
Are you kidding? I'm working. You have a nice holiday. I'll be right here. You know what holiday I got off this year? Yom Kippur. I ate bagels and watched "I Dream of Jeanie."

NEAL
Well, have a nice day.

DRIVER
Impossible. These days, it's impossible.

He sits down and opens the door. Neal steps down off the van.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The van pulls away. Neal looks at the envelope. He turns and scans the lot.

HIS POV

No Red Mustang in sight.

NEAL

He looks at the keys. Looks up. Looks at the pavement.

HIS POV

In big, white letters, D-67.

NEAL

He walks down the row of cars, looking at the space numbers. He stops at an empty space.

C.U. PAVEMENT

It's E-67. No Red Mustang. No nothing.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Neal stands in the empty space looking at the keys and the rental agreement.

NEAL
Son of a bitch...

He looks down the long parking lot aisle.

HIS POV

The van disappears down the lane. Stops. Discharges passengers. Turns and heads down another aisle.

NEAL

He takes off down the aisle.

NEAL
HEY!

EXT. VAN

The last passenger gets off. The doors close and the van pulls out. As it pulls out, we see Neal, breathless and exhausted make a last futile attempt to catch the van. He stops.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The van turns onto the highway leading back to the airport.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Neal drops his two-suiter.

NEAL
SHIT! YAAA!

INT. AIRPORT

The doors open and Neal shuffles in. He's frozen. His pant legs are soaked with road spray. His coat's splattered with

mud. He's blue in the face. He's dragging the two-suiter. His shoes are saturated and covered with salt stains. He has his necktie wrapped around his head to keep his ears warm.

INT. AIRPORT - RENTAL CAR COUNTER

Neal trudges up to the counter. A perky young AGENT finishes her last task and looks up at Neal with a big, friendly, TV ad smile. The smile dissolves as she studies him.

C.U. NEAL

He looks crazed, frozen, wild and mad as hell.

C.U. AGENT

She manages a fresh smile. Less enthusiastic.

AGENT
May I help you?

C.U. NEAL

He leans forward. Talks very softly.

NEAL
Yes.

C.U. AGENT

She leans forward to hear better.

AGENT
(softly)
How?

NEAL AND THE AGENT

He leans a little closer.

NEAL
You can start by wiping that fucking dumb-ass smile off your rosy fuckin' cheeks. Then you can drop the Miss fuckin' Cheerful bullcrap and give me a fuckin' automobile.

The Agent freezes.

NEAL

A fuckin' Mustang, a fuckin' Toyota,
a fuckin' Datsun, a fuckin' Chevy,
four fuckin' wheels and a seat!

AGENT

I don't really care for the way
you're talking to me.

NEAL

I don't really care for the way your
fuckin' company left me out in the
middle of fuckin' nowhere with
fuckin' keys to a fuckin' car that
isn't fuckin' there. And I didn't
really care to fuckin' walk down a
fuckin' highway and across a fuckin'
runway to get back here to have you
smile in my fuckin' face. I'm a
nice man under normal circumstances
and I have nothing against you
except your happy demeanor too
violently illustrates to me how
miserable I am. I want a car.

AGENT

Can I see your rental agreement?

NEAL

No.

AGENT

Why not?

NEAL

It blew away.

AGENT

Oh, boy.

NEAL

Oh, boy, what?

AGENT

You're fucked.

EXT. AIRPORT - ARRIVAL AREA

Neal trudges out of the airport. His eyes are glazed, he's beyond anger. He walks zombie-like to a cab stand. A burly dispatcher addresses him.

DISPATCHER

Where you goin'?

NEAL
Chicago.

The dispatcher pauses.

DISPATCHER
Chicago?

NEAL
Chicago.

DISPATCHER
Do you know you're in St. Louis?

NEAL
Yeah. And I want to be in Chicago.
That's why I'm talking to you.

DISPATCHER
You want to take a cab to Chicago?

NEAL
Yes, I do. Can you help me or are
you going to be like everybody else
I've been running into lately?

DISPATCHER
I can't send a cab to Chicago.

NEAL
Do you know someone who can?

DISPATCHER
Did you try the airlines? They go
to Chicago all the time.

NEAL
If I wanted to joke, I'd follow you
into the john and watch you take a
leak.

The dispatcher glares at Neal.

DISPATCHER
If I gotta look at you for anymore
than two seconds, you're gonna be
lookin' at me upside down and
blurry.

NEAL
All I asked for was a cab. It is
possible for a taxi to transport me
to Chicago. I'm prepared to pay
whatever the meter says plus tip.

(MORE)

NEAL (Cont'd)

I'd much prefer to fly or drive myself but due to holiday traffic, neither of those options are available to me. Can you help me or are you going to stand there like a slab of meat with mittens?

C.U. DISPATCHER

He doesn't much care for Neal's attitude.

DISPATCHER

Time's up.

C.U. NEAL

Doesn't understand.

NEAL

Excuse me?

C.U. DISPATCHER

He draws his fist back.

DISPATCHER

You're excused.

He throws a fist enclosed in leather directly into CAMERA.

C.U. NEAL

he drops backwards OUT OF FRAME.

EXT. STREET

Neal falls into the street. Lands on his ass in front of a car. The contents of his briefcase go flying. He screams and covers his head. The car skids to a stop, inches from Neal's body. Horns blow, tires screech.

C.U. NEAL

Hands over his face. He slowly removes them.

HIS POV

Del Griffith is over him, looking down. He's startled.

DEL
Neal?

C.U. NEAL

He's equally startled.

NEAL
Del?

C.U. DEL

He's relieved to find Neal's alright.

DEL
If I'd had my sunglasses on, I might have run you over.

INT. CAR LATER

Del's driving. Neal's next to him. He's cleaning off his face with a handkerchief.

DEL
I had a feeling when we parted ways that somehow, someday, our paths would cross.

NEAL
Me, too.

DEL
Do you have any idea how glad I am that I didn't kill you?

NEAL
Do you have any idea how disappointed I am that you didn't kill me?

DEL
Hey, now. Chin up, buddy. We're sailing. You remember what I said about you have to go with the flow a little more? I still stand by it.

NEAL

How do I go with the flow when the rental car agency leaves me in a hundred acre parking lot with keys to a car that isn't there and I have to walk three miles back to find out they don't have any cars?

DEL

I got a car. I didn't have to walk. I didn't have to waste one drop of sweat.

NEAL

You're lucky.

DEL

No, I just go with the flow. Cute little gal at the rental counter told me they were out of cars. I gave her a set of shower curtain rings and a compliment on her rosy little cheeks and sweet smile and bing! I'm behind the wheel of a Lincoln at the price of a Datsun.

NEAL

You're a charmed man.

DEL

Nope.

NEAL

You just go with the flow.

DEL

Like a twig on the shoulders of a mighty stream.

He puts his arm up on the seat and puts the hammer down.

EXT. HIGHWAY

A massive green Lincoln speeds past. Del's steamer trunk is hanging out the back of the car trunk which is secured with a length of twine.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

The Lincoln's at the pump. Del and Neal are out of the car. Del's stretching.

DEL
You want to take over for awhile?

NEAL
You've only been driving half an hour.

DEL
You haven't driven at all.

NEAL
I don't care. Fine.

DEL
My back's bothering me. I'd appreciate it.

The attendant returns the hose and caps the tank.

ATTENDANT
Thirty-eight fifty.

Del looks at Neal to say he doesn't have the funds.

DEL
We better pool our cash for chow.
I don't have an oil card. Do you mind?

Neal shakes his head, fishes out his wallet and gives the attendant his credit card. He shuffles into the station.

DEL
I estimate our arrival time around four A.M. Unless you want to stop and get some sleep. I think we could both use it.

DEL
I'd rather sleep in my own bed,
thank you.

DEL
It's not safe pushing yourself on the highway. You caught a punch in the hooter, you got your dander up, you're anxious, you're in a hurry. A highway safety expert will tell you that that's a classic blue print for a wreck.

NEAL
I'm fine.

DEL

We won't have a problem getting a room on this stretch of road. This has been a hell of a day, Neal.

NEAL

I'm getting home tonight. With or without you.

DEL

Without me you won't do well. Face the facts. You're probably a brilliant theoretical man but from what I can observe, you have no technique. That's not a criticism. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the A-bomb had to have Edward Teller tie his shoes. Or so I'm told.

NEAL

I'm in good shape. Don't bother about me.

The attendant returns with the credit card and slip. Neal takes the greasy pen and signs his name.

DEL

I do worry about you because I care about you.

NEAL

If you cared about me, you would have left me alone in Wichita.

Neal takes his card and walks around to the driver's side. Del's staring at him.

DEL

If I'd left you in Wichita, you'd still be in Wichita.

Neal gives him a look and gets in the car. Del opens the door.

DEL

Before we pull out, do you want to call the wife?

(pause)

I just asked.

He gets in and closes the door. Neal starts the car and pulls out.

INT. CAR - LATER

Neal's driving. Del's trying to get comfortable. He's running through the electric seat positions. It's annoying the hell out of Neal.

NEAL

Could you please not do that with
the seat? It's bugging me.

DEL

Once you start screwing around with
these damn things, you can't ever
get comfortable.

NEAL

Then quit screwing around with it.

DEL

I gotta get comfortable. Do you
have a bad back?

Neal doesn't answer.

DEL

Well, I do and it hurts like a
bugger. There's a couple good
positions for it...

He raises the seat bottom and lowers the seat back. The motors grind and squeal.

NEAL

You wanna break it?

DEL

I'm not breaking it.

NEAL

Will you please knock it off?

A couple more tries and he gets the seat the way he wants it.

DEL

There.

NEAL

You done?

DEL

Almost.

NEAL

Now what?

DEL

I can't reach my feet to take off my
shoes.

NEAL

That's just fine. Leave your shoes
on.

DEL

I can't rest with my shoes on.

NEAL

Your feet smell. Leave the shoes
on.

DEL

When did you smell my feet?

NEAL

In the airport. Why is it that
everything you do bothers me?

DEL

I don't know. It could be you.

NEAL

We have another six or seven hours
together. Why can't you just
cooperate with me?

DEL

Can I loosen them?

Neal sighs.

NEAL

Be my guest.

Del pushes the chair button. The motor grinds as he rises forward. He loosens his shoes. He pushes the button again and returns to his position. A few more squirts and he's got it just right.

DEL

You know there're things you do that
bug me.

NEAL

Oh, really? Like what?

DEL

You play with your balls alot.

Neal looks at him. A long stare. Back to the road, back to Del.

DEL

It's true.

NEAL

I don't play with my balls.

DEL

Yes, you do. It's like you're afraid they're gone. You check them a good five, six times an hour.

NEAL

You want to start a fight?

DEL

No. I'm just stating a fact. You fiddle with your nuts alot.

NEAL

I've been wearing the same shorts for two days. They're stretched out.

DEL

That's a good explanation.

NEAL

It's good because it's true.

DEL

Okay.

He closes his eyes.

DEL

Do loose shorts also make you pick your rump?

Neal doesn't look at Del. He puts his foot down. The car thunders ahead.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The car powers past.

INT. CAR - LATER

Neal's driving. Del's sound asleep. Snoring. Neal turns up the music to mask the snoring. The snoring gets louder. Neal turns the music up louder. The snoring goes louder. Neal turns the music full blast. He looks at Del. Sleeping like a baby.

NEAL

Del?

No response. He reaches for the electric window buttons. He opens Del's window. Wind whips in. Del doesn't stir. Neal puts down the other windows. No response from Del.

NEAL

DEL! GRIFFITH! ASSHOLE! LOUD-MOUTH MORON, BUTTHEAD, FAG-BREATH JERK! CHICKEN PICKER! GEEK! DEL!

He reaches over and pokes him. He stirs, turns away and closes his mouth. He stops snoring. Neal puts the windows back up. He turns off the radio. Nothing out of Del. He reaches into his lap and adjusts his crotch.

DEL

Can't leave the walnuts alone, huh?

Neal freezes.

EXT. ROADSIDE CAFE

A greasy, little dump dwarfed by the giant rigs and the Lincoln.

INT. CAFE

Del and Neal are finishing their coffee.

DEL

If you want I'll drive for awhile.

NEAL

That's generous of you considering I've driven all day.

DEL

An hour behind the wheel with my back is like a lifetime for you.

Neal grows weary of the bickering. He changes the subject. To what's really bothering him.

NEAL

I can't believe it's Thanksgiving eve and I'm not home with my family.

DEL

Yeah.

NEAL

You never said anything. Do you have a family?

DEL

Oh, yeah. I'm a big family man. You saw the picture of my wife.

NEAL

Kids?

DEL

Three. Two boys and a girl.

NEAL

I saw your wife. You got pictures of the kids?

DEL

In my trunk.

NEAL

It's hard being away, isn't it?

DEL

The misery. The absolute misery of it.

NEAL

We'll be home soon enough.

DEL

Yeah. Let's roll.

They get up from the table and cross to the cash register. The door opens and a TRUCKER walks in.

TRUCKER

(general announcement)

Anybody headed north, think twice.
Big front moving down. Chicago's history.

He crosses to the counter. Del looks at Neal. Then at the CASHIER.

DEL

What's the motel situation?

CASHIER

Pretty good. Ethyl's Motor Mattress always has an open bed or two.

NEAL

Del, forget it. We'll take it easy.
It'll be fine. Pay the lady.

DEL

Do you take credit cards?

CASHIER

Diner's Club, Visa, Mastercharge...

Del pats Neal on the back. I'll be out front.

EXT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Del's in the car. The motor's running. Neal comes out and gets in the car. Del guns the engine and whips the Lincoln out of the parking space. Grinds to a stop, throws it in forward and squeals out.

INT. CAR

Del's barreling down the road. Neal's laying down, trying to get the seat up.

DEL

I really think we're pressing our luck driving into the teeth of a snow storm.

NEAL

You broke the seat! You broke the goddamn seat!

The motor whinnies as Neal holds his finger on the button.

DEL

It was fine when I got out.

NEAL

You messed around with it until you broke it!

DEL

You want to drive?

NEAL

No, I don't. Why did you have to do this?

DEL

I can't be held responsible for faulty engineering.

NEAL
This is great. Very comfortable.

Neal crosses his arms on his chest as he lays practically falls on his back in the broken seat.

DEL
You like country music?

NEAL
Hate it.

DEL
Is the rule whoever drives programs the music?

NEAL
Not if you're putting on a country station.

DEL
Boy, you sure like to play the boy prince of France don't you?

NEAL
I'm not riding in a broken seat listening to country music.

DEL
I listened to your rock 'n' roll shit.

NEAL
I'm not going to argue with you.
Put on whatever you like. I'm going to sleep.

Del flips on the radio and starts scanning the dial. Two second bursts of music and talk. Up and down the FM band. He hits the AM band and travels it up and down.

NEAL
Find the goddamn station!

DEL
I'm sorry I don't have the worldwide radio network committed to memory.

He flips back to FM.

NEAL
Aw, come on!

Del turns off the radio.

NEAL

What?

DEL

Forget it. You're such a miserable asshole, I don't want to aggravate you anymore than you already are.

NEAL

I'm not miserable. Turn on the radio and find your station.

DEL

Forget it. I'm not in the mood for music anymore.

NEAL

Fine.

DEL

I was. But you ruined it.

NEAL

Sorry.

DEL

No problem. I'll just consult with you from now on about how you want me to behave so that you'll be most comfortable. After all, I only rented the car. You're the passenger.

NEAL

Put on the radio.

DEL

Forget it.

NEAL

No, put it on.

DEL

I'd rather not.

NEAL

Don't play games, Del. Put on the radio.

Del doesn't react. Neal leans forward, does a sit up and flips on the radio. He scans down the dial until he hears the plaintive howl of a steel guitar. He leans back.

DEL

Thanks, Neal.

NEAL

My pleasure.

He settles into the seat and closes his eyes. Del pushes the cigarette lighter in. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a cigarette. The lighter pops and lights the smoke.

DEL

Does my smoke bother you?

NEAL

Not if you crack your window a little.

Del presses the window button. He opens the window a crack.

DEL

Is that too noisy?

NEAL

Close it more or open it more.

NEAL

If I close it more, it'll be closed completely.

He opens the window further. Cold wind rushes in.

DEL

I'll pump the heat, okay?

NEAL .

Fine.

Del blasts the heater fan. Double the noise. He turns up the music above the rush of wind and roar of the fan.

DEL

Get a little shut-eye so you'll be fresh for your shift.

NEAL

I'LL TRY.

Del shifts in his seat, puffs his cigarette.

EXT. HIGHWAY

the Lincoln hurtles down the lonely interstate into the dark of the approaching storm.

INT. CAR

Neal's fallen asleep. Del takes a last puff on the cigarette and carefully slips it out the window. He flicks it away.

INT. CAR - BACKSEAT

The butt is sucked back in the window and lands on Neal's two-suiter in the backseat. The window snaps shut.

INT. CAR

Del bobs his head to the music. He's getting heavily bored. He taps the steering wheel to the beat. Flicks his brights on and off to the beat. It's getting a little warm in the car. He turns off the fan. Drives a bit further. Still too warm. He looks at Neal. He's asleep. He doesn't want to open the window for fear of waking him with the noise. He raises his knees to the steering wheel and attempts to remove his coat.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln from the front. It swerves a little to the left, then back to the right.

INT. CAR

Del has his arms around behind his back trying to get his arms out of the sleeves. As he presses back in the seat, his foot buries the accelerator.

C.U. PEDALS

The accelerator is on the floor.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln screams past.

INT. CAR

Del's steering with his knees, streaking down the highway. He's struggling with his arms. He suddenly realizes that he has a huge problem. He twists to the side.

C.U. DEL'S HANDS

In trying to take off his coat, he's managed to slip his hands into the epaulets on the cuffs of his overcoat and has effectively handcuffed himself.

INT. CAR

Del struggles to free his hands, driving with his knees. Neal's asleep, oblivious to everything.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln's roaring along. It glides across two lanes and shoots up an exit ramp.

INT. CAR

Del rips his hands free, grabs the wheel and hits the brakes. He slams his eyes shut and SCREAMS. The braking force throws Neal and the seat back forward. The seat locks.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln does a 180 and grinds to a halt in a cloud of tire smoke. It comes to rest across the overpass road, pointing toward the ramp it just came up. The engine shudders and dies.

INT. CAR

Neal bends over with the locked seat back holding him doubled over. Del is white as bone china. Speechless, pumped full of adrenalin. Neal looks at him.

NEAL

What the hell are you doing?

Del looks at him. Executes a quick recovery.

DEL

You almost had venison in your lap.
The biggest fuckin' deer I ever saw.
At least a ten point buck. Standing
in the middle of the highway looking
at me like I was a doe in heat.

Neal stares at him.

DEL

If I hit it, we'd be cheese. Go back to sleep. We're making good time.

NEAL

I'm stuck.

DEL

Try the button.

Neal tries it. It just whines.

DEL

Keep your finger on it.

The motor continues to whine. Something catches. The back moves to a normal position but the seat moves forward. Almost to the dash. It stops.

DEL

You got a choice. Leave well enough alone or risk a worse position.

Neal does nothing.

DEL

Good choice.

He starts the engine. Guns it. Huge backfire.

DEL

That wasn't me.

He drops it in gear.

DEL

Go back to sleep. Everything's under control.

EXT. ROAD

The Lincoln lurches ahead and heads down the ramp it came up, heading back onto the highway in the wrong direction.

INT. CAR

Neal slumps down in the seat. Del's wide awake. Alert as a bunny. Neal closes his eyes.

C.U. BACKSEAT

The two-suiter's smoldering. The cigarette's burned a hole in the bag and fallen into the clothes.

C.U. NEAL

He sniffs. Opens his eyes. Looks at Del.

NEAL

You took your shoes off.

C.U. DEL

He looks at Neal.

DEL

Not so. I'm wearing them.

INT. CAR

Neal sits up.

NEAL

What smells?

DEL

Tire rubber probably.

NEAL

Jeez. What a stink.

He settles back in. Del puts his arm up on the window and starts to whistle.

INT. CAR - CROSS ANGLE

Across Del to Neal and out the passenger window. We see a car riding alongside the Lincoln. It's across the median strip. It's going the right direction. Del glances across. Sees the car. Smiles. Puts a little more juice into it. The car running alongside him blows its horn. Del chuckles. He blows his horn and puts the hammer down a little more. Neal sits up and looks at Del.

NEAL

What?

DEL

Some joker wants to race.

He motions his head to the other car. It's horn is blaring. Del lays on his horn and slams the accelerator to the floor. Neal looks out the window.

HIS POV

A sedan is keeping pace across the grass strip dividing the highway. The driver has his window down and is waving his arm furiously.

INT. CAR - DEL

He's looking out the passenger window.

DEL
Is he waving to you? You know him?

C.U. NEAL

He's watching the car.

HIS POV

The car running alongside. The driver's screaming.

C.U. NEAL

He cups his hand to his ear.

NEAL
He wants something.

C.U. DEL

He shoots looks out the window.

DEL
Maybe he's drunk.

C.U. NEAL

He puts his window down.

HIS POV

The driver's screaming.

C.U. NEAL

He screams back.

NEAL

WHAT?!

HIS POV

The driver keeps screaming.

C.U. NEAL

He can't quite make out what the guy's screaming.

NEAL

WRONG WHAT?!

HIS POV

The driver continues hollering.

C.U. NEAL

He sticks his head out the window.

NEAL

WHAT?!

HIS POV

The driver shrieks.

INT. CAR

Neal pulls his head back in the window. He looks at Del.

NEAL

He says we're going the wrong way.

DEL

He's drunk. How would he know where
we're going?

NEAL
Maybe he is dru...

Neal snaps his head around. Looks out the window.

HIS POV

The screaming driver. POV shifts down to the median strip.
The grassy ditch flying past.

C.U. NEAL

It hits him. His eyes bug-out. He snaps his head forward.

EXT. HIGHWAY - FURTHER AHEAD

A pair of ten-wheelers racing up a hill.

INT. CAR

Neal screams. Del looks at him. Snaps his head around to the front.

THEIR POV

Four huge, bright sets of headlights breaking the crest of the hill.

C.U. DEL

Slams his eyes shut.

C.U. NEAL

Eyes frozen open their widest.

C.U. DEL'S FOOT

On the brake pedal. To the floor.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The trucks swerve apart to avoid the Lincoln. They're gone in a flash. The force of the sudden stop sends the steamer trunk hurtling forward. It rips the trunk lid off the car.

The steamer trunk and trunk lid sail over the car and skid down the hill.

INT. CAR

The steering wheel's bent over. Del's hands are gripping it. Neal's hands are embedded in the padded dash.

DEL

I think it's time for you to drive,
Neal.

Neal looks at him.

DEL

I'm getting a little tired. And now
my back really hurts.

Neal looks at his watch.

NEAL

If it wasn't Thanksgiving, I'd kill
you.

DEL

You don't mean that do you?

NEAL

Yes.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln pulls slowly around to the side of the road and comes to a stop pointing in the correct direction. The doors open and Neal and Del get out. They walk around to the back and look at the gaping hole in the back of the Lincoln.

DEL

We could make a jacuzzi out of it.

Neal looks at him. He isn't interested in jokes.

DEL

I'll get my trunk.

He heads down the road. He grabs his back, groans.

DEL

Oh, Jesus. My back!

He rubs the small of his back and continues.

C.U. NEAL

He sighs. He can't let Del drag the trunk back by himself.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Neal follows after Del. As he heads down the highway. We see flames erupt in the backseat of the Lincoln.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Del hobbles toward the trunk. Neal's behind him. In the background we see the interior of the car engulfed in flame. Del stops at the trunk. He grabs one end and drags it to the shoulder. Neal picks up the trunk lid. He carries it to the shoulder and drops it on top of the trunk. He grabs an end. Del grabs the other. They lift and turn to face the Lincoln.

They stop, drop the trunk.

THEIR POV

The ragtop of the Lincoln is on fire.

C.U. DEL

He can't figure why the car's burning.

C.U. NEAL

Complete mystification.

NEAL AND DEL

They watch the car burn.

NEAL

Why is the car on fire?

Del shakes his head.

DEL

I don't know.

NEAL

My suitcase is in the backseat.

DEL

So is your briefcase.

NEAL
And my wallet.

Del looks at Neal.

DEL
And your coat.

NEAL
I'll bet my left nut you did that
with one of your cigarettes.

DEL
I don't think so. I only had one.
I made sure I tossed it out.

NEAL
What I smelled before was the
backseat. Burning plastic. I'll
bet you threw the cigarette out and
it came back in.

DEL
I'm pretty careful. I doubt it.
What difference does it make?

NEAL
Good luck turning the car in.
They'll be happy as pigs in shit
to see you.

Del doesn't say anything. He looks at Neal out the corner of
his eye. Something occurs to Neal. He looks at Del.

DEL
What?

NEAL
How could you rent a car without a
credit card?

Del doesn't know what to say.

NEAL
You couldn't. How'd you get the
car?

DEL
I gave the girl with the cute cheeks
a set of shower curtain rings.

NEAL
You don't rent a Lincoln on shower
curtain rings, Del.

Del knows he's caught.

DEL
What do you want me to say?

NEAL
Which card did you put it on?

DEL
Mastercharge.

NEAL
You stole my Mastercharge?

DEL
No.

NEAL
Then how'd you get it?

DEL
I borrowed it.

NEAL
You stole it!

DEL
I was going to send it back to you,
but you wouldn't give me your
address. I'm sorry. I was stuck.
You ditched me. I had no money.
No cards.

NEAL
Give it back.

DEL
I can't.

NEAL
Why not?

DEL
It's in the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The interior and the roof of the car is burning bright.

EXT. MOTEL

A chain motel. Big, bright sign. The charred Lincoln pulls up in front. All that remains of the roof is a twisted

black frame. Neal's driving. He's wearing a big, ugly wool overcoat and stocking cap. Del's wearing his overcoat and a couple sweaters and a baseball cap.

INT. CAR

The interior is completely charred. They're sitting on bare, burned springs.

DEL
Are you still mad at me?

Neal doesn't say a word.

DEL
You know, you could have killed me slugging me in the stomach when I wasn't ready.

NEAL
I'm sorry I failed.

Neal opens the door and gets out.

DEL
With all this fresh air, we're going to sleep like babies.

INT. MOTEL

Neal walks into the motel. He looks like a patron of an Anchorage resale shop. Del follows him in. Neal marches up to the counter.

NEAL
I need one room.

DEL
If you're still pissed, maybe we should get separate rooms.

NEAL
Get your own room.

The DESK CLERK slides a registration form across the counter. Neal takes the pen and begins filling it in.

CLERK
I need a major credit card.

Neal reaches into his pocket and hands the clerk a charred, melted hunk of plastic.

NEAL
You take American Express?

He reaches into his other pocket and comes up with another melted wad.

NEAL
Mastercharge?

The clerk stares at the plastic. Neal finishes the form.

CLERK
These aren't credit cards.

NEAL
They were. We had a small fire in
the car and they melted. I'm sorry.
I'll pay cash.

CLERK
We need a major credit card.

NEAL
I don't have one. I'm tired. I'm
angry and I'm begging your mercy on
this Thanksgiving Day.

The Clerk considers the request.

CLERK
Well...

NEAL
Be a sport. It's free.

CLERK
You can't use room service.

NEAL
I need a toilet, a sink and a bed.
I'm not hungry.

CLERK
\$42.50.

Neal reaches into his pocket. Counts out his money.

NEAL
How about \$17?

CLERK
I can't do that.

NEAL

How about \$17 and a promise that
I'll send you a check?

CLERK

I don't own the place.

NEAL

How about \$17 and a hell of a nice
watch?

He takes his watch off. The Clerk looks at it.

CLERK

You can't use the phone either.

NEAL

How about a couple feet of toilet
tissue?

CLERK

Sure.

NEAL

Key?

The Clerk turns from the desk and selects a room key. He gives it to Neal.

NEAL

Thanks. Enjoy the watch. It probably cost more than you.

DEL

Neal? Do you remember where you got that money?

NEAL

Yep.

DEL

I gave it to you in St. Joe.

NEAL

Yep. And where did you get it?

DEL

What's that have to do with anything?

NEAL

Where'd you get it?

DEL
(ashamed)
I sold your Visa card to a kid at
the bus station.

NEAL
We're even.

He exits the lobby. Del watches him go. The Clerk turns to Del.

CLERK
You need a room?

DEL
Yeah.

CLERK
Your credit cards burned up?

DEL
I don't carry credit cards.

CLERK
\$42 and no room service or phone
calls.

DEL
I don't have \$42.

CLERK
You got \$17 and a good watch?

DEL
I got two bucks and a Casio.

CLERK
Sorry.

He turns from the counter. He puts Neal's watch to his ear
and sits down. Del looks out the door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Neal's in bed. He exhales loudly. Fluffs his pillow. Sighs.
Shifts positions. Fluffs his pillow again. Exhales again.
Lays still for a moment. Then he sits up. Another sigh. He
gets out of bed and walks to the window. He pulls the curtain
aside and looks out.

HIS POV

Del's sitting in the burned out Lincoln. Snowflakes drift down across the parking lot.

C.U. NEAL

A moment of compassion. Then a moment of reason.

NEAL

What did I do to get that oaf all over me?

HIS POV

Del hunkers down in the seat and tries to get comfortable.

INT. ROOM

Neal lets the curtain close. He walks back to the bed and gets in.

EXT. MOTEL - DEL

He's sitting in the car looking at the motel room. His eyes shift up to the heavy skies.

DEL

Marie, honey? You were right as rain. I'm the biggest pain in the butt that ever came down the pike. I meet a guy who's company I really enjoy. And go overboard. Smother the poor soul. Cause him more problems than he has a right to. I'm starting to wonder if I'm ever going to wake up and face the music.

He breathes a deep, soulful sigh. The motel door opens. Del shifts his look to the motel. Neal's in the doorway.

NEAL

You're gonna freeze to death out there.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Del and Neal are in the bed.

DEL

You know how few people give a shit
about curtain rings?

NEAL

Who cares about lipstick ads?

DEL

At least you deal with pretty girls.
You know what shower rings are?

NEAL

You know what lipstick is?

DEL

When I'm dead and buried all I'll
count for is a quarter million
shower curtains that haven't fallen
down. That's some legacy, huh?

NEAL

My life's work will fade and be
thrown away. Yours'll last longer
than mine.

DEL

What do you pull down a year?

NEAL

I do okay?

DEL

You know what I claimed as income
last year?

NEAL

That means shit. And second string
player in the NFL makes more in a
week than Van Gogh made in his
lifetime.

DEL

Van Gogh Textiles up in Buffalo?

NEAL

The painter.

DEL

Oh.

NEAL

Money's no measurement of worth.
True worth. Worth to the human
race.

DEL

I bang all around this country doing less and less each year. I talk a blue streak but when it comes right down to it, I'm running on fumes. That briefcase I said I got as a sales award? That was fifteen years ago.

NEAL

So?

DEL

I've lost half my accounts to a computer catalogue. Every year half a dozen customers retire and the business goes with them. You ever read "Death of a Salesman?"

NEAL

Sure.

DEL

Boy, do I know where Wily Loman was coming from. Sometimes I find myself practically quoting him.

NEAL

He was an older guy. You're young.

DEL

So what? Youth means diddly squat if you don't have anything to look to but growing old.

NEAL

At the very least, at the absolute minimum, you have a woman you love to grow old with.

Del doesn't reply.

NEAL

You love her, don't you? Your wife?

DEL

Love isn't a big enough word, buddy.

NEAL

So, there you go. Start with that. You know how guys in this world have money and nobody to spend it on?

Del's silent again.

NEAL

Hey, I'm sorry I popped you in the gut.

DEL

I deserved it.

NEAL

No, you didn't.

DEL

Sure I did. If I didn't have one foot in my mouth and the other in a bucket of shit, I wouldn't recognize myself.

NEAL

Well, let me just close the conversation by saying you're one unique individual.

DEL

Unique? That's Latin for asshole.

NEAL

As much trouble as I've had on this little journey, I'm sure someday, I'll look back and have a good laugh.

DEL

Yeah. Maybe.

NEAL

Goodnight. And keep your hands to yourself.

DEL

If I hold anything, it'll be my own.

Neal rolls over.

NEAL

You gonna have your smoke?

DEL

No.

NEAL

Quitting?

DEL

They burned up in the car.

NEAL
Consider quitting, willya?

DEL
My wife used to say that.

NEAL
When did she finally stop?

DEL
(remorseful)
Fifteen years ago March.

NEAL
Good advice. Take it. Night.

A long pause.

DEL
(soft and sad)
Sleep tight.

EXT. MOTEL - MORNING

The snow storm's blown in and left it's white wrath. The Lincoln's filled to the brim with fresh snow.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Neal's laying on the bed in his underwear, curled into a ball, without a pillow or a stitch of covering. Del has both pillows and all the blankets and sheets. Neal wakes with a shiver. He sits up and looks at Del.

NEAL
Del? Get up. Let's roll.

Neal shivers across to the bathroom and goes inside. Del stirs and emerges from the sound of blankets. He's wearing his coat, hat and gloves.

EXT. MOTEL - LATER

Neal and Del are in the car. They've scooped the snow out of the front seat. The back's still piled high. Neal has the car in reverse and is gunning the engine. The car's stuck. Wheels spinning. Nothing happening. Neal lets off the gas.

DEL
We're stuck tighter than two dogs on their wedding night.

NEAL
You want to get out and push?

DEL
Sure.

Neal puts the car in park.

NEAL
Forget it. You'll screw up your back.

He gets out of the car.

DEL
My back's fine. I just didn't feel like driving last night.

NEAL
I'll push anyway.

Del slides over the springs to the driver's side. Neal goes around to the front. Del puts the Lincoln in reverse and hits the gas. Neal pushes with all his soul. Nothing. Del lets off the gas.

DEL
We better rock it. Get along side.

Neal repositions himself on the passenger side. He grips the door handle and the outside mirror. Del drops the car in forward and guns it. Neal pulls on the car. Del shifts quickly to reverse and guns it, Neal pushes. They continue rocking the car back and forth.

DEL
She's starting to grip! A little more. Put your balls into it!

NEAL
I am!

DEL
Squeeze your ass and think of Nazis. We're moving this hunk of shit!

Del throws the car in reverse, it rocks high up on the ice groove.

DEL
One more and we're home free!

He throws the car in forward and guns it. Rocks a little more, catches, leaps forward and plows into the motel.

DEL
Oh, Christ! Wouldn't you know it?
Hop in!

Neal jumps in the car, Del throws it in reverse and plows backwards, up and over the snowbank and into the lot. He dumps it in forward and they're off, leaving a hole in the motel. But no room service charges. Or phone calls.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The charred hulk roars down the highway.

INT. CAR

Del's driving. Neal's shotgun. They're freezing their asses off. The heater's pumping full blast. They're shouting to each other over the roar of the wind.

DEL
You ever been to Hawaii?

NEAL
Once.

DEL
Nice?

NEAL
Yeah.

DEL
Marie and I were going there for our honeymoon. We were all set but I got the call from American Light and Fixture. For my job. I not only blame them for all my career misery, I blame them for depriving me and Marie of a honeymoon.

NEAL
You can always go. It's still there.

DEL
Yeah but it costs more. How you doing for time?

NEAL
I don't know. I gave up my watch.

DEL
I feel bad about that. Why don't you take mine.

NEAL
It's okay.

DEL
No, really, take it. I'd feel much better.

NEAL
I don't want your watch.

DEL
Not good enough for you?

NEAL
No. Not at all. I just don't feel right taking your watch.

Del lifts his knees again to steer as he takes his hands off the wheel to undo his watch.

DEL
Take it or I'll throw it out on the highway.

NEAL
Just watch the road.

DEL
You're taking the goddamn watch if I have to shove it down your throat.

He's having trouble getting it off. He glances down. Then at the road.

NEAL
Watch the road.

DEL
No problem. After last...
(looks at the watch)
...night, I'm all eyes and ears.
(looks up)
Give me a hand with this damn thing.

NEAL
I don't want the watch.

DEL
You're making me feel like crap.
You're taking the watch. Here...

He holds out his wrist. Neal takes off a glove and starts to work on the watch.

DEL

There's a funny little clasp thing underneath. It's a bitch to get off.

NEAL

My fingers are so numb...

DEL

Here, right here.

He takes his other hand off the wheel and points to the clasp.

EXT. HIGHWAY - FURTHER AHEAD

A state police car is parked alongside the road with his radar gun, clocking motorists. The Lincoln hurtles past.

C.U. COP

He stares at the semi-destroyed vehicle with the top down, doing ninety two two guys hunched over in the seats. He hits his siren.

INT. CAR

Neal drops Del's wrist and turns around.

NEAL

Shit! How fast are you going?

Del looks at the speedometer.

HIS POV

The entire dash is melted.

INT. CAR

Del's hunched-over looking at the speedometer.

DEL

It's hard to say, the speedometer's melted.

NEAL

You better pull over.

EXT. HIGHWAY

The Lincoln rolls to a stop. The cop car pulls up behind it. The cop gets out and saunters up to the Lincoln. He looks it over carefully.

COP

Morning.

DEL

Howdy, officer.

NEAL

Hi.

COP

What're you driving here?

DEL

Lincoln Towncar. '86.

The cop looks in the charred backseat.

DEL

We had a small fire last night.

The cop nods.

COP

You know how fast you were going?

DEL

Like I was just telling my friend, the speedometer melted. It's a little hard to say with any degree of accuracy.

COP

How about 98 miles an hour?

DEL

Sounds fair. Like I said, it's hard to tell. Although, come to think of it, it sure was windy.

COP

You consider this vehicle fit for the highway?

DEL

It doesn't look very pretty but it moves.

COP
No inside mirror, no functioning
gauges.

DEL
The radio works.

COP
What're you fellas up to here?

NEAL
We're just trying to get home for
the holidays.

The cop reaches into his back pocket pulls out his ticket book.

COP
Let me see your license.

Del reaches inside his coat for his wallet.

COP
I can't let you fellas go on ahead
in this vehicle.

NEAL
You can't what?

COP
This vehicle's not fit for the road.

Del hands over his license.

COP
You'll follow me to the station and
the vehicle will be impounded until
such time as it is made fit for
travel on Wisconsin state roads.

DEL
Do you realize it's Thanksgiving?

COP
I got a turkey sandwich in the car,
fella. I'm well aware. You boys
didn't have a little eye-opener this
morning, did you?

Neal's thinking.

DEL
Us? No. Me? I don't drink.

COP
You in the drug business?

DEL
Shower curtain rings. Drugs?

NEAL
Excuse me. Did I hear you correctly?

COP
When I see a vehicle of this sort with a couple squirrelly-looking guys like you in it, I wouldn't be serving my citizenry if I didn't ask a few questions.

NEAL
No. Before. You said "Wisconsin state highways?"

COP
That's what I said.

NEAL
Why?

COP
Because you're on a Wisconsin state highway.

Neal looks at Del. He's puzzled.

NEAL
We overshot Chicago.

DEL
We did?

COP
(suspiciously)
You fellas don't know where you are?

NEAL
Not exactly. Can you help us out?

COP
You're about six miles outside of Oconomowoc.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - COURTHOUSE

Del and Neal come out the front doors. Neal's limping a little.

DEL

How do you feel?

NEAL

Oh, just great.

DEL

I've never been strip-searched.
Look on the bright side. You were
clean. That's probably why they
didn't bother checking me. Chalk
it up to experience.

NEAL

Why don't you shut-up, Del?

DEL

I'm sorry, pal. I really am. I
don't know how in the hell we got
so lost. I was watching those signs
religiously.

NEAL

I knew I should have driven.

DEL

From now on, I won't touch a car.

NEAL

We don't have a car.

DEL

True. I don't think there's much
point in trying to fix it, either.
It's pretty well shot. You have
insurance, right?

They reach the curb where Del's trunk and suitcases are piled.

NEAL

That's the rental car company's
problem.

DEL

Yeah.

(pause)

Maybe. Maybe not.

NEAL

What do you mean?

DEL

Since I was using your card and I
felt guilty about it, I tried to
save you a few bucks.

NEAL

Don't say it, Del. For your health
and safety, don't say it.

DEL

I waived the insurance.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Del's holding an ice cube wrapped in a napkin to his eye.
Neal shuffles over to the booth and sits down.

DEL

You know this is twice in less than
twenty-four hours that you've
slugged me.

NEAL

I just called my wife and you'll be
happy to know she's pissed off and
hung up on me.

DEL

Oh, no.

Del lowers the ice cube to reveal a little shiner.

NEAL

She didn't believe a word I said.

DEL

I'll be happy to confirm anything
you'd like with her.

NEAL

Dinner hits the table right after
the football game.

He looks at a wall clock.

NEAL

Right now, it's eleven fifteen.

DEL

Let's pray for double overtime.

NEAL

I have a house full of family, a
wife that's ready to kill me...

DEL

Neal, I'm going to step up to this
challenge.

NEAL

Please don't.

DEL

No, I am. I'll have you home before
the yams hit the table.

He gets up from the booth.

NEAL

Del, I'm begging you to sit down and
leave the situation alone.

DEL

What can happen? You get home. Or
you don't. Isn't it worth one last
shot?

NEAL

No. Things are bad enough. Leave
it alone.

DEL

Neal, you've hit rock bottom. It
doesn't get much lower than having a
state trooper shine a flashlight up
your can.

He hurries out of the coffee shop. The handful of patrons in
the coffee shop turn and look at Neal. They've all overheard
Del's remark. Neal smiles meekly.

PATRON

So, you met Sergeant Kudner, did
you?

The patrons burst into laughter. Neal shrinks in his seat.

PATRON

He's bent as a willow branch in a
hurricane. Happy Thanksgiving to
you, stranger.

The cafe is rocking with howls of laughter.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Neal's standing on the corner, leaning against a mailbox,
enjoying his misery. He hears the GASP OF AIR BRAKES. He
looks down the street.

HIS POV

A semi rolls to a stop and Del climbs down from the passenger side.

DEL
Our ship has come in!

C.U. NEAL

A wary look.

C.U. DEL

He waves Neal on.

DEL
It's free and it's a non-stop!

EXT. HIGHWAY

The semi rolls across the Wisconsin countryside.

INT. TRAILER

Del and Neal are in the trailer surrounded by wooden crates.

DEL
Beats walking, huh? We'll be in Chicago in three hours.
(smacks one of the crates)
Cheese.

NEAL
Yeah.

DEL
Smells, doesn't it?

Neal nods.

DEL
I guess you wouldn't mind if I slipped off my shoes now, huh?

Neal shakes his head, no.

DEL
Too bad it's so cold.

A long pause. Neal's not in the mood for a conversation.

DEL
Too bad we don't have a box of
crackers.

Neal stares at Del. He smiles.

EXT. CHICAGO

The truck barrels down the expressway, heading into the city.

EXT. DEPOT

The semi backs into a loading dock.

EXT. TRUCK - BACK DOORS

A hand hits the lock and swings the doors open. Del and Neal are sitting on Del's trunk.

DEL
We're here!

EXT. LOADING DOCK

DRIVER
I'm gonna get a cup of coffee, you
jokers start unloading.

He heads down the dock.

INT. TRUCK

Neal looks around slowly at Del. Del smiles.

DEL
Nothing's free in this world.
You're in the advertising business,
you oughta know that. Right?

C.U. TV SCREEN

A black and white picture of a football game. Third quarter stats.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE

The driver and the dock worker are in the office watching the game. Del and Neal appear in the doorway.

DEL
We're outta here.

DRIVER
Done?

DEL
Yep.

DRIVER
Thanks.

DEL
Thank you.

NEAL
How much time left in the game?

DRIVER
Fourth quarter's just starting.

Del looks at Neal with a smile.

DEL
You win. You can make it.

Neal actually smiles.

EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN PLATFORM

Del and Neal lug the steamer trunk up the stairs. They set it down. Del reaches into his pocket and removes the last of the money.

DEL
I'll pop for the token. Where you headed?

NEAL
Wilmette.

DEL
I'll be right back.

Del shuffles over to the ticket window. Neal tries to straighten himself up. He brushes off his coat and pats his hair down.

EXT. PLATFORM

Del and Neal are on the platform waiting for the trains.

NEAL

I can't say I had a great time but I
can say that after all is said and
done, you did get me home.

DEL

Next time we'll try to go for a
little more comfort and style.

NEAL

I hope there isn't a next time.

A train pulls into the station.

DEL

This is you.

Neal offers his hand to Del. Del clasps it with both hands.

DEL

You're a hell of a good man, Neal.
I'm sorry for all the trouble I
caused you.

NEAL

It all came out in the wash. Don't
worry about it.

The train pulls to a stop. The doors open.

NEAL

Have a nice holiday.

DEL

You too. Give my best to everybody
you love. Hope someday I can meet
'em.

Neal gives Del a bear hug and runs down the cars to an open door and disappears inside. Del waves to him.

INT. TRAIN

Neal slides into a seat. He breathes a huge sigh of relief.

NEAL

What a trip...

He reaches cross the aisle and snares a discarded newspaper off the seat. He opens it. The train jolts ahead.

EXT. WILMETTE SUBWAY STATION

A neat little brick building in the sedate suburb. A taxi pulls away from the front.

INT. STATION

The train pulls in. The doors open. Neal steps off the train and heads into the station. He's buried in his newspaper, reading as he walks.

INT. STATION

Neal pushes open the door and walks into the station. He's stiff reading the paper. He passes the benches and Del Griffith. Del's sitting on the bench. Neal takes a few steps and stops. He lowers the paper, thinks and turns.

C.U. DEL

He smiles sheepishly.

C.U. NEAL

He's dumbfounded.

C.U. DEL

Clears his throat.

DEL

Hi.

C.U. NEAL

He's beyond words.

INT. STATION

Del looks away. Neal walks over to him.

NEAL

Del? What are you doing here?

Del looks up at him. He doesn't say anything.

NEAL

You said you were going to Homewood.
What're you doing here?

DEL

I don't live in Homewood.

NEAL

I'm not getting into this, Del.
I don't know what you're up to but
I'm going home.

Del nods. He's serious and somber. The old enthusiasm and bullshit has evaporated. Neal heads to the doors. He starts to exit. Stops. A long beat and he kicks the door.

NEAL

God damn it!

Del jumps from the sudden noise. Neal turns to him.

DEL

Go ahead, Neal. I'm sorry. I
shouldn't be here.

NEAL

You're right, Del. I don't know
what the deal is with you but you
ought to be home. I oughta be home.
I don't understand you, I don't
understand any of this. I've said
goodbye to you ten times in two
days.

DEL

I know. Go on home. I'm fine.

NEAL

Don't give me that shit, Del.
Why don't you go home?

Del looks at the floor.

NEAL

Huh?

Del doesn't answer.

NEAL

What's the matter with you? Why the
hell don't you go home!?

Del looks up at him.

DEL

I can't.

NEAL

(loud and angry)
What do you mean, you can't?
Why not?

There's a long pause.

C.U. DEL

Serious, dying inside.

C.U. NEAL

Waits for a response. Holds his anger at bay.

C.U. DEL

Looks away, looks back.

DEL

I don't have a home.

C.U. NEAL

The anger fades. To be replaced by confusion.

C.U. DEL

Looks at Neal. Sorry he's burdened him, sorry for everything he's done. But lost and down and completely out of emotional options.

DEL

Marie's been dead fifteen years.

C.U. NEAL

Like a knife through his heart.

INT. TRAIN STATION - LATER

Del and Neal are sitting on facing benched. Del's smoking.

DEL

She was sick when we got married. Her bones. She just never got better. Once she was gone, I sold the place. I didn't much feel like being there. My life was empty enough as it was. The thought of rambling around the place without Marie there...I just closed it up, took a few things and I've been on the road since.

NEAL

The trunk?

Del reaches in his pocket and comes up with a key. He unlocks the trunk and opens it.

C.U. TRUNK

The remnants of Del's domestic life. A lamp, some sheets, towels, pictures, a couple pans, fragile things wrapped in newspaper.

INT. STATION

Neal leans back from the trunk. He closes the lid.

DEL

I didn't have much family. A brother in Montana, some cousins, Marie's folks died back-to-back the year after we married. They were pretty old. She was a late child. We didn't have kids. We had plans.

He smiles sadly.

DEL

She wanted three kids. Two boys and a girl. She couldn't have any, though. So we didn't and I guess it's just as well. I number about 300 motels as my home. I sort of attach myself to people from time to time. Like with you. Especially around the holidays. I can take it in March, July, October. I don't mind it. But it gets hard about this time of year. I've never had much of a chance to be a family man but it gets really hard. And you know what it is?

Neal shakes his head. He's about to cry.

DEL

I don't get to give any of myself to anybody. It's not the getting I miss, it's the giving. I sat on that plane with you and I thought about you heading home to be with your people. And Tuesday night when you were in the shower and I looked at the picture of your kids, man, I thought you gotta be the luckiest man on Earth to go home and put those little guys on your knee and hug 'em and kiss 'em. I'm thirty-nine years old and I never had that and...I never will. I'm sorry about all this. I just kinda lost control this time. Every year since Marie's been gone, I've gotten closer and closer to losing it. Usually, I head for a church. I can feel like I'm part of something when I'm in a church. This time...I guess I didn't get to the church fast enough. I just couldn't let go.

He looks at his watch.

DEL

I vowed I'd never burden anybody with this. And I broke my vow, held you away from your family. Caused you a hell of a lot of trouble. You better run.

Neal stares at the floor, devastated by Del's story.

DEL

I'm gonna head back downtown. He stands up. I know the firm you work for. I read your business card. I've kept a sort of tab on what I owe you and I'll get it all back to you. And I just want to say, in fifteen years on the road, I never met a nicer guy than you.

He bends over and slaps the lock on the trunk.

DEL

And that comes straight from my heart. God bless you, buddy. A few more like you and the planet'd be in good shape.

He lifts one end of the trunk and picks up his suitcase and sample case.

DEL
When I give my thanks, it's gonna be
for meeting you.

He starts to drag the trunk back to the platform. Neal looks up. Looks at Del.

NEAL
Same here.

Del stops. He looks back at Neal. Gives him a wink and continues across the station.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - HOUSE

It's dark, cars are parked up and down both sides of the street. Lights are burning in a big, old two-story colonial.

INT. HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM

The football game's just ended. Neal's father-in-law, MARTIN, and his father, HAROLD, are in the family room watching the TV. A two-year-old girl, MARTI, is on the floor combing her My Little Pony's hair. A five-year-old boy, LITTLE NEAL, is sharing a chair with Martin.

MARTIN
I'm telling you, the Lions' never
fail to disappoint.

HAROLD
They won, for God's sake.

MARTIN
It was a squeaker, Hal. If they win
it's always a squeaker.

LITTLE NEAL
What's a squeaker?

MARTIN
You just watched one.

LITTLE NEAL
I did? And I didn't know it?

INT. KITCHEN

Neal's wife, SUE, is finishing a relish tray. Her mother, JOY, is stirring gravy. And her mother-in-law, PEG, is whipping mashed potatoes with an egg-beater.

SUE

For all I know, Neal could be splattered all over some highway somewhere.

Peg shuts off the beater. It's her son.

PEG

Are you just trying to upset me?

JOY

Of course not.

(to Sue)

Last time he called he said what?

SUE

He said he and this Del Griffith person were in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin...

PEG

Martin and I have friends in Oconomowoc, the Kudners. Their boy's a state trooper.

SUE

I think he's full of crap. He said the rental car burned up. He said he got robbed. He and this Del Griffith.

JOY

Who's Del Griffith?

SUE

Some guy he met at the airport in New York.

Sue stops her work.

PEG

The airport was closed, honey. I don't know how you expect him to get in when the airport's closed.

SUE

He was with Jerry Lane in New York. I called Jean Lane this morning.

(MORE)

SUE (Cont'd)

She said Jerry left New York Tuesday morning. A day later than Neal, and he's home, so don't tell me he couldn't get home!

She undoes her apron and throws it down on the table. She storms out of the room.

JOY

Oh, boy.

PEG

Neal wouldn't lie to her.
(pause)
Would he?

INT. HOUSE - FOYER

Little Neal's crossing the foyer heading for the dining room. Sue stomps in from the living room and heads up the stairs.

LITTLE NEAL

When are we going to eat?

SUE

Never!

LITTLE NEAL

Never? Never again?

The grandfathers come into the foyer from the living room. Joy and Peg come in from the dining room. SETH stumbles up to Harold and grabs his pant leg. Marti peeks through the grandpas.

MARTIN

What's the fuss?

JOY

Sue's a little upset.

HAROLD

What's the problem?

MARTI

Because Daddy's not here.

JOY

I'll go have a word with her.
Why don't you all go sit down.

Joy starts for the stairs. The doorbell rings.

MARTIN
Who the heck's calling at this hour
on Thanksgiving?

Marti bursts through the grandpas and charges to the door.
She grabs the knob with both hands and pulls it open.

MARTI
DADDY!

HER POV

Neal and Del Griffith are standing at the door holding the trunk.

NEAL
Hi, sweetie!

INT. FOYER

Peg leans up the stairs and calls to Sue.

PEG
SUSAN! NEAL'S HOME!

INT. FOYER

Neal and Del lug the trunk into the house and set it down.
Neal closes the door.

NEAL
Did I miss the turkey?

LITTLE NEAL
We're never eating again.

NEAL
What?

MARTIN
What the hell happened to you
fellas?

NEAL
Dad this is Del Griffith.
(to Del)
This is my Dad, Martin Page.

Del shakes Martin's hand. Neal introduces everybody to Del.
Del shakes hands all around.

NEAL

My mother, Peg, father-in-law,
Harold, mother-in-law, Joy. This
little guy's Neal, Jr., this is my
little gem, Marti, and...

He picks up Seth.

NEAL

This is my baby boy, Seth.

He kisses Seth.

NEAL

(to Seth)

Can you say, hi?

INT. HOUSE - TOP OF THE STAIRS

Susan's at the top of the stairs, looking down. Her eyes are darkened with mascara moistened by her tears. She sniffs and composes herself.

INT. FOYER - NEAL

He looks past Seth to the stairs and sees Susan. He smiles from rim to rim.

NEAL

Honey? I'd like you to meet a friend of mine.

Del looks up the stairs. He pushes his mussed hair back and smiles humbly.

C.U. SUSAN

She smiles.

SUE

Hello, Mr. Griffith.

INT. FOYER

Neal gives Seth to Del and charges up the stairs. Susan runs down and they embrace mid-way. Neal kisses her like never before.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The family is seated at the table. Del's at the head of the table, a huge tom turkey before him. Neal's at the other end of the table. Kids and grandparents on either side. Susan to Neal's right. Del and Neal have showered, shaved and changed.

DEL

It's been a long time since I sat
behind a turkey like this.

SUE

It might be a little done.

DEL

I want to thank you all for letting
me be a part of your holiday.
You'll never know how much it means
to me. I've always had a lot of
things to be thankful for. But
never more than right now.

NEAL

Same here, pal.

SUE

Marti? Do you want to say
something?

Marti looks at her for a moment. Susan nods to her, to help
her remember what she has to say.

MARTI

Oh, yeah.
(thinks)
Heap high the board with...What?

SUE

Plentious cheer.

MARTI

With plentious cheer. And gather to
the...what?

SUE

Feast.

MARTI

Feast. And...

She thinks as hard as she can.

DEL

Toast the sturdy Pilgrim band...

MARTI
Toast the sturdy Pilgrim band...

MARTI AND DEL
...whose courage never ceased.

Everybody joins in.

ALL
Give praise to that Almighty
Gracious One...

INT. FOYER

We hold on the trunk sitting in the middle of the room as the voices spill out from the dining room.

ALL
...by whom their steps were led,
And thank unto the harvest's Lord
who sends our daily bread.

LITTLE NEAL
Amen.

DEL
Amen.

FADE DOWN. END TITLE.

THE END